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An analysis of nonformal education needs of rural women: A one village case study in India

Neela Trivedi
Iowa State University

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**An analysis of nonformal education needs of rural women: A
one village case study in India**

Trivedi, Neela, Ph.D.

Iowa State University, 1992

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Ann Arbor, MI 48106

**An analysis of nonformal education needs of rural women:
A one village case study in India**

by

Neela Trivedi

**A Dissertation Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
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Ames, Iowa**

1992

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INTRODUCTION

Education has been regarded as a potential instrument for rural development and a panacea for all ills in the developing countries. However, formal education in these countries has not contributed to development nor has it catered to the needs of the majority who live in the rural areas (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974).

Most developing nations have made extensive efforts to extend educational opportunities by the simple, linear expansion of their existing formal school system. These attempts have not been as successful as originally hoped due to the population growth and lack of financial and human resources to meet the demands. The aim of having fully developed Western-type systems of schooling has been severely criticized (Brembeck, 1973; Callaway, 1973; Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; D'Aeth, 1975; Grandstaff, 1974).

In most developing countries, the educational system is a continuation of the one established during colonial times to suit the needs and requirements of the colonialists. Too often education was dissociated from the needs of the society, it was too expensive, unsuited to the predominantly agricultural societies, and ignored their language, literature, religion, traditions and customs--in the broadest sense--their culture (Altbach & Kelly, 1978). The perpetuation of such a system has led to its serving the needs of the upper and middle classes of society who use it to achieve status and power, as a mechanism for upward social mobility, and to perpetuate that inequality (Kindervatter, 1979; Dighe, 1985). "Formal education also tends to support the status quo and to maintain socio-cultural values, norms, and myths" (Kindervatter, 1979, p. 50). Curtin

(1982) reports that the expansion of formal education systems failed to consider the real situation and the needs of female population in many South and Southeast Asian countries.

The realization of these problems led educational planners to look for alternatives, for learning experiences outside the formal schools--in short, for nonformal education. Nonformal education programs arose out of a need in the Third World countries to compensate for the inability and failure of the formal educational systems to reach out to a vast majority of the people. In the early 60's it became increasingly clear to the developing nations that the goal of providing universal education for the entire population is an unrealistic one. In the early 1970s there was an extensive attempt to expand and reconceptualize adult education and to introduce new educational alternatives particularly for rural population (Ahmed and Coombs, 1975; Faure, 1972).

Nonformal education is an effective strategy in achieving the development of human resources of the rural sector. Its role in equity, in the newer aspects of development, and in maximizing the benefits of formal education has been recognized in recent decades (Brembeck, 1973). According to La Belle (1982), "Non-formal education has demonstrated some utility for youth and adults in responding to societal problems involving health, nutrition, unemployment, food production, and so on, that tend to characterize Third World concerns" (p. 160). Bernard and Gayfer (1981, p. 60-61) have reported that:

When viewed as the learning-empowerment component of any development activity--health, agriculture, marketing, literacy, skill training--nonformal and adult education now shows that it offers a significant strategy in redressing the sexual imbalances in development practices and the resulting conditions of subordination, exploitation and marginalization.

Several benefits of nonformal education have been cited in literature by educators and practitioners in adult education and rural development. It has been particularly recommended for women and other educationally underprivileged groups who have had limited access to formal school. However, very few people agree on the role that nonformal education should play in the developing nations.

The education of women is associated with the possibility of earning incomes, more effective population control, and improving basic living conditions (United Nations, 1976; Safilios-Rothschild, 1979; Stone, 1983). There is powerful evidence that education is one of the most potent factors for changing women's lives--but for this change to be a liberating force, the type of education they receive is crucial (United Nations, 1986). The problems of women and development are critically interrelated, and so are the problems of education and development concerning women. " . . . educational disparity augments other disparities and educational equality is the single most powerful instrument of overcoming the other disabilities" (Doraiswami, 1974, p. 1).

Women consistently have fewer opportunities to acquire skills necessary to share in the benefits of modernization. A study of seven developing countries found that: "Women today appear to play active roles both as decision makers and participants in most rural development-related work. . . Despite this fact, external development projects designed to transfer technology to rural people seldom incorporate women as participants" (Mickelwait, Riegelman & Sweet, 1976, p. xiii).

The report of the United Nations presents a comparative analysis of European, North American, and Third World countries. It indicates a wide gap in educational opportunities, economic participation, health, marital status, and political role of women in these regions. In developing countries, the opportunities for education in rural areas have been limited for both men and for women. Particularly the literacy rates of women in the Third World presents a grim picture. Women's literacy and access to education lags behind that of men, and the situation is even more accentuated for rural women. Illiteracy is a major factor limiting women's contribution to economic and social development (Paolucci et al., 1976).

Despite marked gains in education of women in the developing countries since 1960s, women remain under-represented at all levels of education relative to men. Fewer females than males enter educational programs, be they formal or nonformal, fewer receive technical and vocational training (Jayaweera, 1979; Murray, 1981; Kelly & Elliot, 1982). Research on women's education in the Third World has demonstrated that education does not have the same social and economic outcomes for women as it has for men. According to Kelly and Elliot, ". . . the social and economic outcomes of women's education are shaped by sex-gender systems that place women in subordination to men" (p. 4). They recognize that schooling throughout the Third World functions in the context of social systems that oppress women.

The discrimination against women exists not only in the formal sector of education but also in nonformal education and development programs. Programs aiming at agriculture and other skills training have often failed to incorporate women as participants. Researchers have discovered that planned

development programs have not been uniformly meaningful nor beneficial to women. The diversity and importance of the economic and social roles played by women in rural areas in developing countries has not been appreciated by planners and policy makers, so that development projects have been directed at men and projects for social welfare at women (Mazumdar, 1978; Jayaweera, 1979).

Several reasons have been identified for the low participation of women and for the failure of the programs. Some of the obstacles to women's participation in the development programs are the cultural attitudes and the perceptions of women's role in the society. Often programs are seen as irrelevant or are offered at times and places that are inconvenient to women. Some programs were even found to be directed at men when the subject of training was related to the task usually performed by women. In many cases programs have strengthened the social oppression and marginalization of women.

Even when programs have succeeded in teaching women practical skills, few foster the decision-making skills or self-esteem necessary to help women cope with new problems. Despite the increasing awareness of the need to offer a variety of programs, non-formal education programs for women are still dominated by training courses in handicrafts and homemaking skills (Curtin, 1982; Nelson, 1979; Dighe, 1985; Mazumdar, 1978; Morris, 1978). This has both direct and indirect impact on women. It determines and limits their participation in the development process, and it reinforces traditional sex-related benefits.

Development workers and educational practitioners have recognized that countries can no longer afford to ignore the role women play in society or their potential contribution to development. Although some specialists have recognized these problems for a long time, it is only recently that the issue of women in development has attracted wide spread attention. Boserup (1970) recommends the implementation of formal and nonformal education programs that would assure full rights to social and economic participation of women.

In 1975, the International Women's Year and the subsequent declaration of the decade 1976-85 as the U.N. Decade for Women, served as catalysts for reexamining the role of women in development. The plan of action taken at the World Conference on International Women's Year in Mexico City in 1975, reflect the recognition of the need for education and training for women. "... the full integration of women in development cannot be achieved without improvement in health, education and training for employment . . . " (United Nations, 1975, p. 87). The plan also suggests providing adequate facilities for the formal and nonformal education for women and girls, especially those in rural areas. Rihani (1978) suggests that training programs for women be devised in accordance with the wide range of economic activities that would help diminish the gap in levels of knowledge and training between women and men.

The above discussion emphasizes the need for nonformal education for the rural Third World with focus on women's education. It can be concluded that to make any significant contribution to development (individual and national), education in the Third World should (a) focus on rural areas, (b) be nonformal in nature, and (c) be directed at women.

Women's Education in India

The development process in India has been associated with increasing unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and inequality. The situation calls for sustained attempts at education and the involvement of concerned people in the development process (Mehta, 1978). Formal education has not been effective in meeting the development needs of the rural areas. It has been found to be even more irrelevant for rural women given their social and economic roles (Doraiswami, 1974; Mukhopadhyay 1984; Elliot, 1984).

According to the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974), "The sharp increase in the number of illiterate women in spite of the rapid expansion of education of women at various levels, points to severe imbalances in the distribution of educational effort and resources among different sections of the population" (p. 266).

The educational profile in 1975 indicated that formal schooling had failed to reach the goals for women and that it had not alleviated inequalities (Elliot, 1984). The population growth and the educational lags led to a rise in the absolute number of illiterate women. Sixty-seven percent of all women in the prime productive/reproductive age group, 15-34 were illiterate.

Severe problems of literacy, dropout, wastage, and loss of literacy have been reported with reference to the rural population. The extent to which women in India have been bypassed by the formal education system is evident by the high illiteracy rates and the pervasive dropout rates at the elementary level. According to the 1981 Census, the literacy rate for men was 46.7 percent and for women, 24.8 percent. Literacy rates among male and female populations

in both rural and urban areas, given in Table 1, shows the disparities among different groups. The incidence of literacy among rural women and persons belonging to the economically and socially deprived sections of the society is even lower. The problem of illiteracy in India is primarily a problem of female illiteracy, and is more pronounced in the case of rural females (Mukhopadhyay, 1984). Female illiteracy is found to have a correlation with infant mortality. Infant mortality is high in the case of illiterate mothers both in urban and rural areas, but much higher in the latter (UNICEF, 1984). There is increasing evidence that women's education leads to higher family income and to increases in health, nutrition and family planning.

The Constitution of India guarantees free and compulsory education for children in the age group 6-14 years. Despite the increase in the enrollment at the elementary level there was a phenomenal rise in the absolute number of illiterates. One of the reasons for this is the high dropout rate at the elementary stage.

Dropout rates have been particularly high in the case of girls and at the elementary level. Out of 100 children enrolled in grade I, only 37 reach grade V and 23 reach grade VIII. The dropout rate in 1980 was 63.1 percent for primary school and 77.1 percent for middle school. In the case of females, only 16 to 18 percent of those enrolled in grade I reach grade VIII.

Table 1 shows the disparities in enrollment rates among girls and boys. To improve this situation, successive Five Year Plans have been initiated by the Government to emphasize women's education at the elementary and secondary level. However, apart from the usual constraints on the supply of formal education; (inadequacy of teachers, equipment, etc) social, cultural, economic

Table 1. Literacy and enrollment rates (percentage) 1981

	Total	Male	Female
<u>Literacy</u> ^a	36.23	46.89	24.82
Urban	57.40	65.83	47.82
Rural	29.65	40.79	17.96
<u>Adult Literacy</u> ^a (age 15+)	40.76	54.85	25.68
<u>Enrollment</u> ^b			
Class I-V	83.7	99.4	66.9
Class VI-VIII	41.9	54.2	29.1

^a Census of India, 1981

^b Bhandari, 1985

and pedagogical factors have been found to be some of the obstacles to the education of girls (Doraiswami, 1974; ICSSR, 1975; Mazumdar, 1978; Mukhopadhyay, 1984).

Naik (1982) has listed some of the obstacles to the education of girls such as: families' needs to care for younger siblings, their reluctance to send prepubertal girls outside their house, early marriages, and the natal family's unwillingness to invest in girls. These factors, says Naik, "seem so deeply

embedded in the culture's fundamental attitudes toward women that change can only be evolutionary" (p. 153).

Following the recommendations of the National Committee on the Status of Women in India, the Indian Planning Commission shifted its focus on women's employment and eradicating illiteracy. The International Women's Year and the U.N. Decade for Women gave further impetus resulting in a National Plan of Action which identified the areas of education, health, employment and legislation as priority areas to improve the social and economic conditions of women (United Nations, 1980). Among the recommendations made at the annual All India Adult Education Conference in 1981, were the following:

- Women's education is a fundamental and an urgent need of the society. All agencies should deal seriously with problems of combating illiteracy among women.
- Highest priority should be given to organizing adult education programs for women in areas having literacy level below 20% and in this task educational institutions and women's organizations be actively involved.
- More and more women should participate in learning activities so as to enable them to participate fully in the cooperative affairs.

Since the recommendations, many innovative efforts in adult and nonformal education for women have been undertaken by government and non-government agencies.

Women and Development

The report on the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women (Copenhagen, 1980) brings out the fact that, "Women represent 50 percent of world adult population, a third of official labor force, perform nearly two-thirds of all working hours, receive only a tenth of world income and own less than one percent of world property" (UNICEF, 1984, p. 79). The situation is more or less the same for India.

The constitution of India pledges equality of status and opportunity, justice--social, economic and political--and dignity of the individual, to men and women equally. The foundation of the constitutional equality was laid by Mahatma Gandhi who visualized a transformation of women's roles and responsibilities in the task of national reconstruction. Although the constitution guarantees equality of opportunity for women in every sphere of activity, women have lagged behind because of a variety of constraints mainly, social, cultural and economic.

The 1975 Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India concluded that development had caused a devaluation of women's status, and poor rural women were invisible to development programs and educators. This was reflected in the declining sex ratio of women to men, declining labor force participation, more unemployment, lower expectation of life compared to men, and low rate of literacy.

Towards the end of the U. N. Decade for Women, progress in the sectors of health, education and employment were reported in India. According to a United Nations report, "... the ugly educational gap in numbers and

educational attainment levels between boys and girls had narrowed remarkably during the Decade" (The Standard, July 27, 1985, p. 14). The report, however, adds that these are world averages. Also, the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary-level education has increased, but it declines sharply thereafter because of high drop-out rate of girls. A recent U. N. report (1991) mentions that despite broad progress towards literacy, a huge deficit of literacy remains among adult women, especially rural women. Many girls and women still do not have equal access to education and training. "Growing populations in some developing regions [including India] are outpacing educational efforts, so that while illiteracy rates have dropped, the actual number of illiterate girls and women has increased" (United Nations, 1991, p. 45).

Statistical data on women's status in India during the 80's, when compared to the 1971 Census data on women's literacy rate, life expectancy, sex ratio, and work participation, indicate that the status of women had improved very little and that they continue to remain a disadvantaged group.

The report on the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women held in Nairobi, Kenya, July, 1985 (United Nations, 1986) recommends that special measures should be adopted to revise and adapt women's education to the realities of the developing world. Also, Governments should establish targets and adopt appropriate measures to eliminate the high rate of illiteracy by the year 2000 and priority should be given to women's programs. It further recommends that "Efforts should be made to promote functional literacy with special emphasis on health, nutrition and viable economic skills and opportunities in order to eradicate illiteracy among women . . ." (p. 41).

Education specialists and those concerned with rural development have recommended alternatives to the formal education system that would provide education and training adapted to the needs of specific categories of women, closely linked to the social, cultural and economic milieu in which they live and work.

It is believed that when directly connected to the needs of the people, the positive effects of education are evident in the way people participate. Women respond to institutions in ways that meet the needs women perceive, given the circumstances of their daily lives (Kelly and Elliot, 1982).

Given this perspective and assuming that women's participation in nonformal education will enhance their status and their role in development, it is necessary to examine the following: (1) the kind of nonformal education programs to which women have access, (2) the perceptions of women as to the relevancy of these programs, (3) the needs of women that can be addressed by nonformal education programs, and (4) the social, cultural, physical and pedagogical factors that affect women's participation in such programs.

Definitions

Nonformal Education

The problem of nonformal education as a concept is that it means different things to different people. There is no definition of nonformal education that is agreed upon by everyone.

A few definitions that have been widely used are presented here.

Nonformal education has been defined as "... any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children" (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8).

Paulston (1973, p. 65) has defined it as "... any structured, systematic, non-school educational and training activities of relatively short duration, where sponsoring agencies seek concrete behavioral changes in fairly distinct target populations."

Several others (Dejene, 1980; Ward & Dettoni, 1974; Kleis, et al., 1974; LaBelle, 1982; Rainey, 1979) have attempted to define nonformal education and have listed a number of characteristics. The common theme that emerges can be summarized as follows:

1. Nonformal education encompasses a wide range of educational and developmental activities that aim to relate to the immediate needs of the target population. Rewards occur immediately.
2. The content of the program tends to be practical and functionally oriented. It is usually intended to bring specific skills or changes in attitude among clientele.
3. It can be designed to fit the learning needs and to the unique situation of the target population.
4. As a methodology, it enhances participation and involves the learner in the teaching-learning process.
5. Programs are known to be cost-effective. Existing resources available locally-- both human and material - can be utilized effectively.

6. It is run by government, private or voluntary agency, but its organizational setup is not as rigidly structured and hierarchical by age, academic performance or role as in formal settings.
7. Nonformal education programs are decentralized and do not have as much external control as the formal system. They have more autonomy in decision making at the local level.

Nonformal education is regarded as more egalitarian and mass concerned in nature, relatively inexpensive and convenient as compared to formal education (Shah & Bhan, 1980). Besides, nonformal education programs are flexible; can cover a wide scope of clients; can be monitored and held accountable. Based on discussions at a conference on nonformal education, Niehoff (1977) defines it as:

... the method of assessing the needs and interests of adults and out-of-school youth in developing countries - of communicating with them, motivating them to participate, helping them to acquire necessary skills, to adopt behavioral patterns, and related activities which will increase their productivity and improve their living standards (p. 8).

According to the definitions given, non-formal education includes programs such as agricultural and farmer training programs, adult literacy, occupational skills training given outside the formal system, and various community programs in health, nutrition, family planning, etc. Such programs are designed to improve production and living standards of the rural poor and are often referred to as "development" programs in many countries.

The role of nonformal education is not limited to imparting skills and meeting the basic needs of the rural populations. La Belle (1976) and Kindervatter (1979) have defined its role in the process of social change and empowerment. "The recent 'people-oriented' perspectives on Third World

development necessarily involve social change, rather than mere economic growth. Changes are required in socio-economic structures and relationships to enable poor people to participate in and benefit from development efforts" (Kindervatter, p. 8). The 'empowering' role of nonformal education is believed to adapt to the 'people-oriented' perspectives on development. Nonformal education as an empowering process is oriented toward influencing socio-economic structures and relationships through group action-taking. Programs (whether related to health, literacy or vocational skills) are designed "to enable people to critically analyze their own life situations and to develop the skills required for acting to improve their situations" (Kindervatter, p. 13).

Educational Needs

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) have grouped educational needs that are important for rural development into four main headings:

1. General or basic education: literacy, numeracy, an elementary understanding of science and one's environment, etc.
2. Family improvement education: designed primarily to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes useful in improving the quality of family life, such as health and nutrition, homemaking, child care, family planning, etc.
3. Community improvement education: designed to strengthen local and national institutions and processes through instruction in such matters as local and national government, cooperatives, community projects, etc.
4. Occupational education: designed to develop particular knowledge and skills associated with various economic activities and useful in making a living.

These four types of education are needed by both young people and adults, male and female. All three types of education--formal, nonformal and informal--described by Coombs and Ahmed (1974) play an important and varied function in fulfilling these needs.

Bowers and Associates (cited in Griffith, 1978) have provided the following definition of need: "... the lack of something which, according to the best information available, is necessary for self-actualization of individuals for the improvement of the quality of life in the community" (p. 387).

Need identification according to Leagans (1964), is immensely complex. "It is complex because people are complex ... their customs and value systems are complex; the economic, social and physical environment giving rise to needs, and in which needs must be met, are complex" (p. 90).

Leagans (1964) classifies needs into three categories: (1) physical needs, (2) social needs, and (3) integrative needs. Further, from the psychological standpoint, he classifies needs into two broad groups: (1) felt or consciously recognized needs, and (2) unfelt or unrecognized needs. Beatty (cited in Griffith, 1978) categorizes needs into two types, felt and prescribed. Felt needs are equivalent to individual wants or desires; prescribed needs rest on a minimum standard set by society (p. 387).

Nonformal Education Programs

Nonformal education is the fastest growing sector in the educational system in India. Adult education has been in existence in India over centuries in its own traditional ways. However, it was only after independence in 1947,

that the role of education as an instrument of social change and development was recognized. Literacy and adult education engaged the attention of State and Central governments and the program was included in the Five Year Plans.

Some of the programs launched during this period were:

- Social Education program (1951-61)
- The Gram Shikshan Mohim (village education movement, 1959)
- The Farmer's Functional Literacy Project (1967-68)
- The Nonformal Education Project for Youth--15-25 age group (1974-78)
- Experimental program on nonformal education for rural women (1972)

These programs (except the last one), were for both men and women, and no specific attempt was made to reach women. Also, the extent of participation of women in these programs was not known. According to reports, although the initial response to these programs was encouraging, they suffered from several limitations and inadequacies such as: relapse into illiteracy, lack of coordination among agencies, inadequate financial outlay, and poor supervisory, monitoring and evaluation systems (Bordia, 1980). Regarding the Nonformal Education program for the 15-25 age group, Bordia observed that "Although conceptually the program incorporated the most recent thinking in the field of adult education, in practice it was seldom distinguishable from routine literacy programs" (p. 61).

Besides the direct efforts by the government in implementing programs, the Ministry of Education has also been promoting adult education through voluntary agencies since 1953. Some of these agencies, such as the Indian Adult Education Association, State Adult Education Council, Literacy House in Lucknow, and the Gujarat State Social Education Committee have been in

operation with government support. Although some of these agencies did organize activities for women, their efforts were sporadic and limited in coverage. Most of the activities were focused around strengthening women's role as a homemaker, such as child care, cooking, sewing, handicrafts, etc.

Although nonformal education programs had been in operation earlier in varying forms, it was after the International Women's year in 1975 that various nonformal education programs were introduced for women.

During the 70s several government and non-government agencies offered nonformal education programs for women. The scheme of Functional Literacy for women was introduced under the Integrated Child Development Services program in 1975. Although the project included functional literacy as one of its components, the major focus was on child care, health and home economics.

Planners and policy makers realized the need for integrating education with development. Adult education component was included in various development projects of the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Family Welfare, Education, Culture and Social Welfare, Information and Broadcasting, Department of Cooperatives and Ministry of Labor (Directorate of Adult Education, 1984). Although a number of agencies/organizations (government and non-government) were offering skill training programs for women to improve the economic role of women, the major focus of these programs was on low paid skills such as sewing, knitting, handicrafts, etc.

Most programs involving training in literacy, health, child care, and income generating skills were sporadic in nature, limited in their outreach, and the extent of women's participation in them is not known. The content of most of the programs show that they reinforced the role of women as mother and

caretaker, leading to their domestication rather than liberation or empowerment.

One of the serious criticisms of the existing programs is that they are guided by the same patriarchal principles that have pervaded development thinking in the country and have further served to marginalize and oppress women (Dighe, 1985). Most of the programs ignore the fact that the majority of women in rural areas are involved in agricultural production. There are some attempts at providing agriculture and dairy training to women but these are limited to a few regions in the country. Some of the programs that provide training in management and accounting skills, and to help them organize, are undertaken by the non-government organizations. The case of Self Employed Women's Association is one such example.

There was an absence of any comprehensive program of adult education until the Sixth Five Year Plan, when the National Adult Education Program (NAEP) was launched in 1978 with the purpose of providing universal primary education and eradicating adult illiteracy. The program is targeted to illiterate adults in the 15-35 age group with women as one of the priority groups. Although the program aims at imparting literacy, creating social awareness and providing functional skills, evaluation studies have shown that the program has emphasized literacy and has neglected the other two areas. The program also faces several other problems, mainly among them are: motivation of learners, coordination between development agencies, insufficient training of functionaries, inadequate resource support, lack of women instructors, lack of community support, etc. There is little information available as to the access of rural women and their response to these programs at the national level.

According to one report, over 55 per cent of participants in the adult education centers were women, a much higher proportion of the relevant population than is reached by formal schooling (Elliot, 1984).

In the 80s several non-government organizations (NGOs) have undertaken the task of providing literacy and income generating skills among urban and rural women. Few of these NGOs involve an integrated approach to providing training in income generating activities, functional literacy, marketing, accounting, and gaining credit, in an attempt to foster greater self-reliance and empowerment. The Self-Employed Women's Association provides credit and other resources and training to women in a number of skills that foster self-reliance and empowerment. Another program conducted by a voluntary agency, called the Action for Welfare and Awakening in the Rural Environment (AWARE), has made demonstrable impact on tribal women's lives in South India. The approach used by AWARE involves skill training and creating awareness by informing villagers of their rights and organizing them for action.

The progress in the sectors of health, education and employment mentioned in the National report submitted by India for the U. N. Decade (1980), has been the outcome of various general and special programs and projects implemented in the country. The current development debate has shifted the focus from growth-oriented to people-oriented approaches and the search for alternative strategies has led to interesting development efforts with emphasis on decentralization and grass root level participation (United Nations, 1980).

Approaches to Needs Assessment in Adult and Nonformal Education

Adult and community educators have been often disappointed due to the inadequate conceptualizations of needs assessment which makes implementation almost impossible (Beatty cited in Griffith, 1978, p. 386). According to McMahon (1970), the most commonly used method of determining need is the survey or poll. However, Stufflebeam et al. (1985) have criticized the simplistic approaches to needs assessment that involve the use of tests or some other easily quantifiable measure and then compare the results to a predetermined standard. The difference between the standard and the observed performance is the need. Such a standard, says Stufflebeam, is too often arbitrarily established.

Leagans views needs as the difference or the gap between 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. Needs assessment involves determining 'what is' (study of the situation) and what 'ought to be' (research findings and value judgements of leaders and extension workers.).

Monette (1979) criticizes the approaches in needs assessment in adult education that are exclusively technical. Needs according to him are complex value judgments and their assessment requires judgments beyond the technical.

Freire (1970) advocated an approach to needs assessment which places high priority on individual autonomy and the freedom to transform reality. His approach is similar to the felt needs approach, but involves further questioning or "problematizing" the felt needs and assisting people in examining the causes of their felt needs in lieu of the situation. Freire's approach differs from approaches based on the diagnosis of prescriptive need or on the identification of

felt need (Monette, 1979). This approach has important implications in determining the needs of people who are not aware of their real needs and who live in a socially oppressive society.

A relatively new technique of assessing community needs called the "focus group" technique has been suggested by Krueger (1988) and Lee (1984). Lee used the focus group assessment technique to determine continuing education needs of rural women. This technique uses small group interaction to identify responses to a set of questions. As a result of discussion and nominal group process, a list of needs is developed and prioritized. The technique is effective in involving the participation of clients in identifying and determining the implications of their felt needs.

Stubblefield (1973) proposed a diagnostic model for need identification which is principally applied to diagnosing the educational needs of persons in relation to their participation in social systems. The process involves the identification of symptoms and problems to determine the need.

Hamilton-Smith (1975) illustrates four dimensions in the measurement of needs--normative, attitudinal, behavioral and comparative--and suggests using this dimension in the identification of four types of needs defined by Bradshaw (cited in Hamilton-Smith), namely, normative need, felt need, expressed need and comparative need. In practice however, Hamilton-Smith have found that needs are often measured in fields where no generally accepted normative standards exist. The approach used by them involves seeking: (1) basic descriptive data which enables differentiating between the various patterns of viewpoint expressed by each of the major cultural or other elements within the population; (2) through an extensive series of interrelated questions, the

respondent's felt needs and attitudes towards both his (her) own needs and the present pattern of services; and (3) further questions that help in describing patterns of life style and behavior in relation to existing services. Where possible, the information is related to comparative data from other communities.

Blackwell (cited in McMahon, 1970, p. 16) identified seven interrelated dimensions of the community to be considered in a framework of social change. They are: (1) The population base or the characteristics of the people, (2) the institutional structure of the community, (3) the value systems, (4) social stratification, (5) informal social relationships, (6) the power structure of the community, and (7) the ecology of the community.

Similarly, Rothman and Gant (1987) have cited six approaches (described by Horton) widely used in conducting needs assessment research: (1) general population survey, (2) target population survey, (3) service provider survey, (4) key informant survey, (5) review of social indicators, and (6) review of administrative and managerial records.

Stufflebeam et al., (1985) have summarized the different approaches to needs assessment as follows: (1) the discrepancy view, (2) the democratic view, (3) the analytic view, and (4) the diagnostic view. Based on their assumption that "... needs do not exist per se but rather are the outcomes of human judgments, values and interactions within a given context"; they suggest that "... any needs assessment information must be judged and interpreted within the context of purposes, values, cause-effect relationships, and so on..." (p. 12).

In recent years, approaches to needs assessment have used more informal, holistic, and community involvement techniques. Especially in the assessment

of community needs in the developing countries and in rural communities. Suggestions have been made in studying the community in their context--the social, economic, and political context. Murray (1978) has proposed a "sociocultural" model for examining the needs of rural women. She offers a comprehensive meaning of the term "sociocultural" to include (1) patterns of human behavior and (2) its products. These two aspects of the sociocultural context includes the following factors: environmental, political, family, economic, work, technology, health, and education. Murray suggests that these areas are interrelated and therefore should not be addressed in isolation from other areas of participants' lives.

The approach used in this study is similar to the holistic approach of needs assessment proposed by Murray. It departs from Murray's model in that the sociocultural factors are examined to determine only the educational needs of women in these areas and not needs in general.

Need for the Study

There is enormous literature available on women and development in the Third World countries. The concern with the status of women in the 70s led to innumerable studies dealing with the role and status of women. Literature on women in India has mainly focused on the status of women in the historical perspective or are general overview of women's social, political, religious, and legal status. Most of them have focused on urban women. Very few among them have dealt with the role and status of rural women.

A few studies have concentrated on the role and participation of women in rural development (Mazumdar, 1978; Mukhopadhyay, 1984; Sharma, Hussain & Saharya, 1984) and the differential work patterns among different groups of rural women (Sharma, 1980; Khan & Ayesha, 1982). These studies provide very little information on women's educational needs and their participation in nonformal education.

Research on the education of Third world women has focused mainly on the formal education system. Desai (1976), Kelly and Elliot (1982) and Ahmad (1985) have studied women's formal education in India. Naik (1982) has described a project on nonformal education for out-of-school girls. Dighe (1985) studied nonformal education programs for women in India and has provided a critique of these programs.

Literature on development and nonformal education indicate that the kinds of case studies on women's or integrated programs that are analytic and contain useful insights for other practitioners are rare. Even though more and more case studies are being undertaken, they usually are impressionistic and factual descriptions. Most evaluative studies are undertaken due to the need of funding or sponsoring agencies and therefore are evaluations of single programs in a country or region (Ahmed and Coombs, 1975).

Very little information is available on which nonformal education approaches work best, under what circumstances and for which target group. Also because of the differing perspective on the issues of women and development and nonformal education, there is lack of consensus as to what women's needs are and how those needs should be met. Seldom have researchers analyzed the needs and perceptions of the target audience,

particularly women, for such programs. Moreover, there has been a tendency to overlook the analysis of the needs of women in the sociocultural context within which nonformal education functions.

This study will provide suggestions for the improvement of nonformal education programs and a guideline that could be of value to educational planners and policy makers in the field of adult and extension education, rural development, comparative and international education and communication. Since most developing countries have similar problems, it is expected that the suggestions made by the study will help specialists in the above fields design strategies for nonformal educational programs that are compatible with women's needs and their sociocultural milieu.

Purpose and Approach

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the nonformal education needs of rural women in the sociocultural context. A one village case study was conducted in a village in Gujarat State in India (see Figure 1).

Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

1. to describe the physical, social and cultural milieu that determine women's need for and participation in nonformal education;
2. to identify the needs of rural women that can be addressed through nonformal education programs; and
3. to explore the perceptions and attitudes of women toward nonformal education.

It is assumed that the needs of women are determined by and grow out of the sociocultural context and therefore can be adequately understood only in terms of this context. An ethnographic approach was therefore considered to be the most appropriate means of accomplishing the objectives of the study.

It is also assumed that participation of people in programs reflects their need. An approach to need identification and its utilization in adult education program planning is the level of participation (Griffith, 1978). The qualitative methods used for collecting the data were:

- a. Participant observation--observations of women's activities and their interactions with community members; participation in local clubs and organizations; program activities and participation; training of instructors of nonformal education program.
- b. In-depth interviews - both unstructured and semi-structured: (i) with women who are residents of the village; (ii) with local leaders, teachers, and other key figures in the community; and (iii) with the staff and administrators of the nonformal education programs.
- c. Group discussions with women from different localities in the village that represented different caste groups.
- d. Examination of documents such as census reports, project records, evaluation reports on and instructional materials used in nonformal education programs.

Apart from observations and interviews in the village, interviews with administrators and officials involved in various educational and development programs at the State and district level, were also conducted in order to learn their views and attitudes towards women's education. Observations of

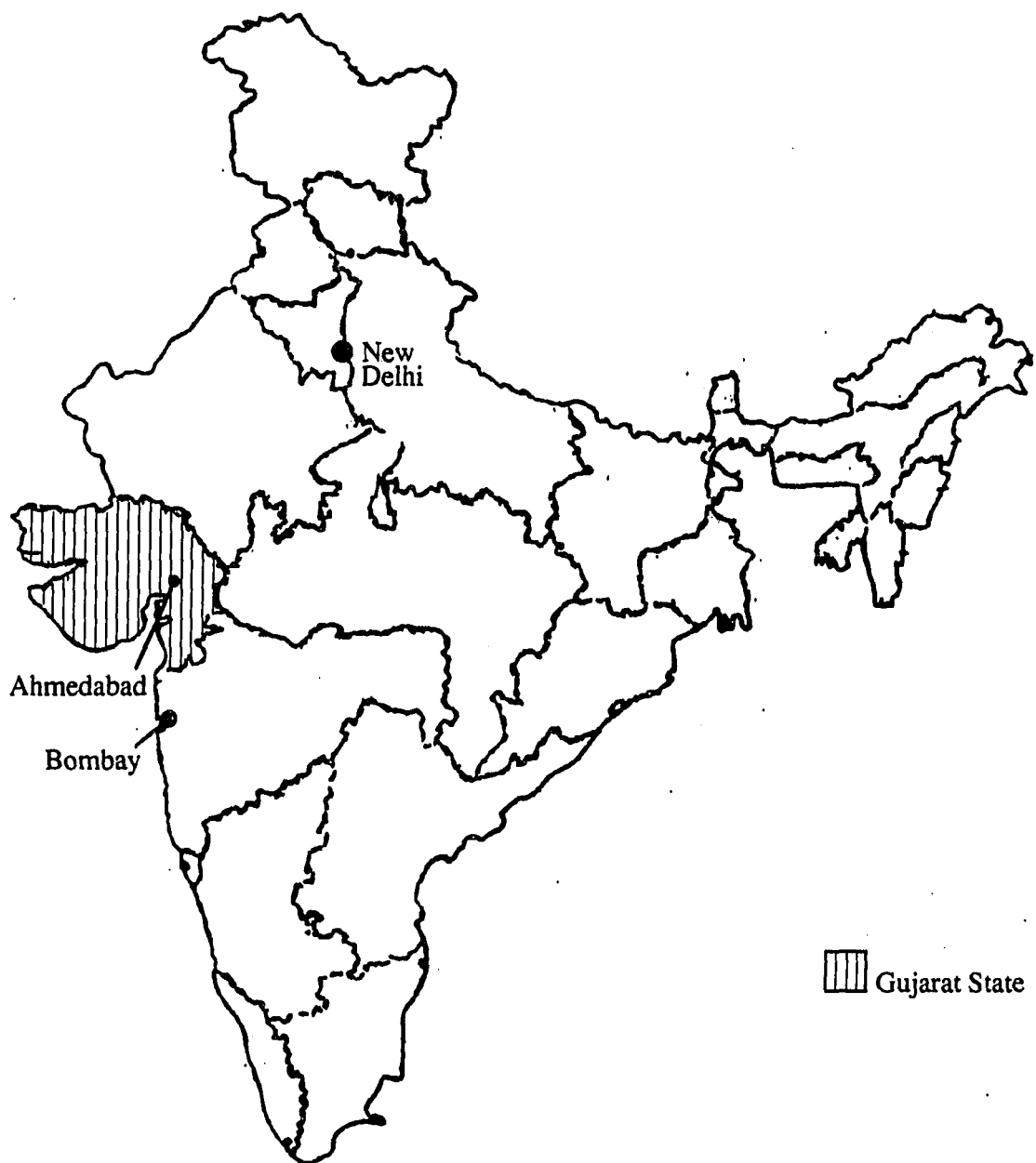


Figure 1. Map of India

programs in a few other villages were conducted whenever possible to gain a broader perspective and to understand the phenomena observed in the study village.

A list of questions that guided the fieldwork are:

1. How do rural women perceive education--both formal and nonformal education?
2. Are women aware of the nonformal education programs and development schemes available locally?
3. What are the physical, social, cultural, and economic constraints affecting women's need for and participation in nonformal education?
4. What are the needs of women that can be addressed by nonformal education programs?
5. What are some of the reasons for and against participation in nonformal education programs?
6. What are some of the activities women are engaged in - household, agricultural, social and religious.
7. What are the attitudes of local leaders and program functionaries towards nonformal education for women?
8. What are the implications of the above in planning nonformal education programs for rural women?

Scope and Limitations

This ethnographic study was limited to one village in Gujarat State in India. As most of the development projects in India are administered and

implemented within a district, information about various nonformal education programs and development schemes was collected from the district and State headquarters.

The ethnographic case study approach (in-depth interviews and observations over a period of time) revealed detailed information about and insights into women's needs, attitudes, values and behaviors that would not have been possible through quantitative surveys alone. Data from the study are compared with findings from national and international studies whenever available.

Due to the nature of the data collection, the study will be more valuable for determining implications for planning, design, and implementation of nonformal education programs for specific target populations rather than resolving specific issues and making broad generalizations. As most of the Third World countries have similar problems, especially those pertaining to educational status of women and rural development, it is expected that the findings will provide valuable suggestions for planners, practitioners and researchers in the field of education and development of women in the Third World.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine nonformal education for rural women in the sociocultural context. This chapter describes the methods and procedures used to examine how rural women perceive nonformal education, the reasons for and barriers to participation in nonformal education programs, and their needs that can be addressed by nonformal education programs.

It was assumed that the role of nonformal education in a rural community is defined by and grows out of the sociocultural context and that the need for and participation in nonformal education can be adequately understood only in terms of this context. Sensitivity to context is essential for those using qualitative approaches (Smith, 1986). The researcher felt the need to examine nonformal education for women from the perspective of women themselves and the community in which they live. An ethnographic approach was thus considered to be the most appropriate means of achieving the objectives of the study. It was decided to conduct a one-village case study in order to meet the objectives of the study.

"Ethnographic approaches to the study of education, as a subset of qualitative research, have surged to prominence only in the past decade" (Spindler & Spindler, 1987, p. xi). Recently the term ethnography has been used interchangeably with fieldwork, case study, qualitative research (Merriam, 1988) and naturalistic inquiry (Williams, 1986).

The goal of ethnography is to "grasp the native's point of view" (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25). Ethnographers attempt to record how natives behave

and how they explain their behavior and an ethnography is an orderly report of this recording (Spindler & Spindler, 1987).

The purpose of educational ethnography according to Goetz and LeCompte (1984) is "to provide rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants in educational settings (p. 17) . . . ethnographies provide researchers with alternatives for describing, interpreting, and explaining the social world and the operation of educational phenomena within this world" (p. 31).

An ethnographic case study in education typically involves a sociocultural interpretation of the unit of study whether this unit is the students, schools or nonformal education. It is the concern with the context that sets this type of study apart from other qualitative approaches (Merriam, 1988).

Selection of the Field Work Site

The objectives of the study guided in formulating the criteria for selection of the research site. An important criteria was that the research be conducted in a rural setting as the majority of the illiterate population are in the rural areas suggesting a greater need for nonformal education in these areas. Also because women in rural areas have little access to formal education compared to their urban counterparts, it was assumed that nonformal education is of greater relevance to them.

The second criteria was that some form of nonformal education program be implemented in the village so as to have an opportunity to directly observe the participants and various aspects of the program in action.

Another consideration was that the village should be representative of most others in the region/district and not too developed (in terms of rate of literacy, educational facilities and infrastructures), nor underdeveloped compared to most other villages. Although, as Bliss and Stern (1982) in their village study in North India have observed, there is no such thing as the representative village, any village that was atypical was to be excluded.

It was important to select a village that was within commuting distance from Ahmedabad (where I resided) in case living arrangements in the village did not work out. It was equally important that it was not too close to the urban center to be influenced by it. Considering that I was to conduct the field work independently, without support for transportation and other facilities from any local organization, it was decided to look for a village that was approachable by means of public transportation. These criteria are not free from some of the biases such as the roadside, tarmac and dry season bias mentioned by Chambers (1983).

Given the fact, as in most developing countries, that information necessary to make decisions about the selection is not readily available, the selection process itself turned out to be a long, tedious process. Initially, I decided to select a village from the region where I had previous experience in doing field work and then look for a list of villages which had non-formal education program/s implemented. As the National Adult Education Program (one of the major nonformal education programs in the country) was of comparatively long-term duration (ten months), I decided to obtain a list of villages from the District office where the program was implemented. Upon contacting the District Adult Education Office it was found that the term for the ongoing project

was to end within a month and the next project would not start until a few months later. Considering that this may not give me an opportunity to observe the adult education classes if I selected a village from this district, I decided to look for another district where the project was in its initial stage or was to start soon. I did visit a few villages in this district to observe another nonformal education program - the dairy training program for women--which was organized by the District Cooperative Milk Producers Union.

Another district, Gandhinagar, was then visited to look for relevant information for selection of the village. Gandhinagar district is similar to the previously selected district in terms of rate of literacy, language and culture, although Gandhinagar is not as developed industrially as the other district. The town of Gandhinagar, being the State capitol and the district headquarters, has most of the State and district government offices. I visited several district level offices in the town of Gandhinagar to obtain information about various projects and schemes implemented within the rural areas in the district. Later I also visited some of the voluntary agencies to gather information about their programs. Following is a list of agencies visited in Gandhinagar that implemented nonformal education programs and rural development programs that had an educational component.

1. District Adult Education Office
2. District Education Office
3. Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment
4. Integrated Child Development Services
5. Development of Women and Children in rural areas
6. Health & Family Welfare Programme

7. Farm Science Center

8. Cooperative Dairy Development Scheme

Among the above agencies only a few had programs at the village level. All, except the Adult Education Program, had a short-term workshop or training ranging from one to six days at the village level. I therefore decided to contact the Adult Education Office first and select a village from among their list of villages with Adult Education Centers (AEC). At the time the project had 100 AECs in 34 villages. The project had three supervisors who were each responsible for a third of the AECs. I met two of the supervisors; one of them volunteered to accompany me to the villages to observe the AECs. Upon examining his list of ten villages I found that many of these did not fit the criteria for selection of the study village. Some of them were large villages (population over 3000), some had literacy level above the district average and one did not have an AEC for women. This left us with four villages which I decided to visit. The Project Officer and the supervisor were both very helpful and accompanied me to one of the villages to observe the adult education class. After visiting three other villages, Dhanap was selected as the study village as it met most of the criteria mentioned above and because I found the people very hospitable. A profile of the district and the village is given in the next chapter.

Research Techniques

The objectives of the study guided in selecting the techniques for data collection and determining the focus of field research. The design of the study

was kept flexible to allow for changes to adapt to the local situation (Marshall and Rossman, 1989) and to maximize opportunities for exploration and better understanding of the variety of issues and perspectives (Stake cited in Williams, 1986). According to Pelto and Pelto (1970), in practically every instance of field research, the techniques employed must be adapted by the fieldworker to the special requirements of the local scene. As a result of such flexibility, researchers often discover new areas of information not foreseen in their original research plans. Smits (1984, p. 50), in writing about research in developing countries suggests that "radical alternatives in research techniques may also be called for when local circumstances deviate too much from the original research design."

The original plan of the study involved a focus on the nonformal education programs and to study women as participants of the programs. However, after gathering preliminary information it was found that even when a village is listed as having certain program/s, there was no guarantee that the program will be functioning in the village. Since the objective was to study women's perceptions, needs, and attitudes in relation to nonformal education and to examine this in the sociocultural context, it seemed more appropriate to focus on women at the village level. The focus of inquiry could then be shifted to nonformal education needs rather than participation in programs, in case the program did not function.

Fieldwork involved collection of data on different topics and from a variety of sources and therefore required a variety of research techniques. Information about nonformal education, women's education, physical, social, cultural and other aspects of the community was gathered from three groups: (a) women above 15 years of age who were residents of the village; (b) leaders and

key figures in the community such as teachers, school principal, village headman, community health worker, etc; (c) administrators and other functionaries who were involved with the nonformal education programs in the study village and/or other villages.

From among the first group, I decided to study women who were enrolled in the AEC since I was told that there were two AECs in the village. The plan was to obtain a list of participants and then look for an equal number of non-participants with similar socio-economic characteristics and conduct in-depth interviews with them. However, after my first few visits I learned that the AECs in the village had not been functioning for quite some time. I contacted some of the women who had enrolled and found that they had attended only the first one or two sessions. I detected several loopholes in the list of participants given by the instructor, such as names of women who did not permanently reside in the village, women who were already literate, etc. It seemed that the category of participants was nonexistent in the practical sense.

In order to select informants for in-depth study, I looked for another criteria and found that the category most commonly used by the people was the location of their residence which they referred to as their caste "quarter" or "ward". As in most Indian villages, the location of one's residence is determined by the caste. The houses are in clusters and each of these clusters, quarters or wards belong to a particular caste. The division is not always physically distinct and a caste may have more than one quarter. I decided to conduct observations and interviews in each of the quarters representing a different caste.

The primary methods of data collection employed in this study were participant and non-participant observation and interview. Documents and

records such as census reports, evaluation reports of other researchers, materials used in AECs, etc. were used, whenever available, as supplemental techniques.

Observation and interviews were used in varying degrees during all phases of the fieldwork. From each of the selected quarters I conducted at least one (or more) in-depth, individual interview and group discussions. This resulted in 25 in-depth interviews. In few of the quarters where it was difficult to conduct individual interviews, only group discussions were held on several different occasions.

Observations were used in the initial phase to become familiar with the village and to learn about women's daily chores and activities. In the later phase observations were most helpful in understanding interaction patterns, participation in nonformal education programs and in special events and activities. Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 213) state that "In situations where motives, attitudes, beliefs, and values direct much, if not most of the activity, the most sophisticated instrument we possess is still the careful observer"

"Participant observation is a special form of observation and demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study. Immersion in the setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 79). McCall and Simmons (1969, p. 349) define participant observation as " . . . a style or strategy of research, a characteristic type of research enterprise which makes use of several methods and techniques organized in a distinctive research design." The technique requires the observer in a face-to-face relationship with the observed, and participate with them in their natural life setting to gather data. "The observer is part of the context being observed and modifies and is influenced by this context"

(McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 91). "Participant observation offers learning opportunities that cannot be duplicated by any other method" (Whyte, 1984, p. 23).

A detailed recording of the observations were made during or after the event had been observed depending upon the situation. In more structured situations, for instance, the supervisor's and instructor's training sessions, it was possible to record most of the observations on the site. Whereas observational notes were made later, for instance, when observing interactions between people. Also depending upon the situation my degree of participation varied from being a complete observer to being a "participant as observer", although, for most part, I remained an "observer as participant" and my participation was secondary to my role of information gatherer.

Interviews were used extensively in the study to collect data on phenomena that could not be observed directly, to answer the 'why' questions about behaviors observed, and to supplement the data on the observed phenomena. The types of interviews employed in the study were:

- (1) Unstructured interviews were mainly used while interviewing women and other informants in the village. These were in-depth interviews conducted to gather detailed information about women's roles and activities, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions on formal and nonformal education, educational needs, reasons for participation in programs, etc. The questions were formulated during the initial phase of fieldwork and were modified as a result of information gathered.
- (2) Semi-structured Interviews were mainly used with the administrators and program staff. The questions served as a guideline to collect information

about specific pre-determined topics and issues related to various aspects of nonformal education program, their assessment of nonformal education programs, women's needs, interests and participation, attitude toward women's education, etc. The interview process allowed for exploration outside the planned focus.

- (3) Group Discussions were organized as the field situation often made it impossible to conduct individual interviews with women. These were informal group discussions with a specific purpose and focus.

Interviews with informants were at first friendly, informal conversations and as rapport was developed, key questions or elements relevant to the study were introduced. Questions were often repeated and rephrased to encourage the informant to go into more detail (Spradley, 1979). For instance, the informant was asked, "what are some of the activities you would like to engage in during leisure time?" and further probe involved asking, "can you think of any other activities you might be interested in?" My background in clinical psychology and previous fieldwork experience helped me in establishing rapport, asking probe questions, looking for clues--subtle and explicit--and interpreting the responses. After reviewing the field notes, if a response needed to be clarified or elaborated, further questions were asked of the informants in the next session.

Interviews with the program staff, except the Adult Education instructors, were conducted in their offices. All other interviews were conducted in a natural setting in people's homes, frontyards or porches. Brief or condensed notes were taken during the interviews. These notes included phrases, words and brief sentences. An expanded account of these condensed notes were made as soon as possible after each field session to fill in the details (Spradley, 1978).

Tape recorder was not used during the interviews as it seemed to distract the informants. I tried using the tape recorder initially and found that it attracted children and other young men and women in the neighborhood who, fascinated by this gadget, were eager to listen to the recorded material and often interrupted and distracted the informant. Also from the cultural standpoint young women face resentment from their family members and the community if they disclose certain information about their families and the community, more so if it was recorded.

Both interview and observations were conducted simultaneously over an extended period of time. Situations, events and people were interviewed and/or observed more than once. In-depth interviews with each informant were often conducted over two or three sessions. Observations guided in formulating some important questions for interviewing and interviews helped in interpreting the significance of what was observed and to place the observed scene in context (Whyte, 1984). Spindler and Spindler (1987) mentions that "there is a constant interaction between observation and interview . . . one observes, begins to formulate questions, asks questions . . . observes some more with perceptions sharpened by new cultural knowledge - refines questions, focusing them on relationships that appear to be particularly critical, observes some more, . . . and so on and on" (p. 20).

My first contact in the village was with the Adult Education instructor who was expecting my visit as she was informed by the supervisor. She gave me some information about the AEC, the participants and about the village in general. The initial phase of fieldwork was a period of exploration, general observation and casual conversations with the community members - men,

women and children. I spent some time getting to know the village physically. I visited the primary school, the preschool, the Panchayat office (village council) and people's houses and gathered information about the village social life and different institutions and organizations. This phase helped in building rapport with the community members. It not only provided specific and general information about the village and the community but also gave me further direction for data collection - what and how best to gather them. One event lead to another, one informant provided information that led to meeting others who later became informants for the study.

During the first phase I also visited the District Adult Education Office in order to obtain further information about the program. I also visited the Farm Science Center and the Cooperative Dairy Development office to learn about their activities and programs and attended their program in another village. At the State Resource Center located in Ahmedabad, I observed the training sessions of Adult Education Program supervisors. These activities broadened my perspective and made possible the contextual description of events I observed in the village.

The fieldwork was interrupted temporarily due to the riots that erupted in Ahmedabad and in several other towns in the State including Gandhinagar. The riots had started as a result of protests against government policies and further intensified by communal riots in Ahmedabad which has a history of Hindu-Muslim conflict. Often there were strikes affecting public transportation and other services and when violence erupted, a curfew was imposed. Fieldwork was halted for about two months until the situation was back to normal and I could rely on transportation and feel safe. The situation however,

was not completely normal during the next three months as strikes and curfews featured frequently during this time. I used this time visiting some voluntary agencies in Ahmedabad that were involved in programs for rural women. I also visited some libraries and researchers at institutions who had conducted evaluation studies on the Adult Education Program and collected their reports.

In the next phase fieldwork was more intensive and focused. Observations and interviews were more focused than before. I also had the opportunity to observe a three day training in nutrition and food preparation organized in the village by the staff of the Farm Science Center. I attended some of the local events such as the women's club, a house warming ceremony, etc. Interviews with informants were also more detailed with questions covering specific topics of direct significance to the study. I also took photographs of the village and some of my informants. Field research in the village was conducted for a year and a half which includes the few months of interruption due to the disturbances in the State. Special care was taken to preserve the confidentiality of the interviews.

Researcher's Role

Throughout the period of fieldwork, I commuted from Ahmedabad as arrangements for living in the village could not be made. There was a direct bus service from Ahmedabad and from Gandhinagar which I found convenient.

In general, I found the people in the community very friendly and hospitable. In the beginning people were very curious about me and made fanciful assumptions about my role even after I explained the purpose of my

visits. At first, as I had first contacted the adult education instructor and asked questions about the AECs, some of the women who knew about this thought that I was working for the program and was like a supervisor. Others took me for a government worker who came routinely to collect information. Later, when I directed my inquiry to schools and children's education they assumed that I was a teacher and asked me if I could teach their children. After I attended the women's religious club twice, they thought I was interested in joining the club. My role was perceived differently during the initial phase but later as they came to know me better they were convinced of my role and stopped making such assumptions. I noticed that my presence did not affect their chores and activities. They still continued to show curiosity about me - my caste, marital status, etc. Often they were sympathetic toward me when I visited the village during summer on days when the temperatures were near 110⁰F. They appreciated my efforts and were concerned about the travel expenses involved in commuting. At times they were even protective of me and would ask me to leave the village before dark for my own safety. I often served as a source of information. They would ask me to give the latest news from the city especially during the time when disturbances were going on.

THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

This chapter describes the physical and the sociocultural environment in which the fieldwork was conducted. A brief profile of the District is followed by a detailed description of the village and a profile of the women who are the main focus of the study. Included in the description is the physical characteristics of the area, the various local organizations and infrastructures, social and educational institutions and programs, social customs and practices, health practices, women's roles and activities, and patterns of interaction affecting women's lives.

The data were collected by using the available documents at the local and district level such as the District Gazetteer, Census reports, district statistical reports, and reports from the District Adult Education Office. At the village level some information was available from the records maintained by the school and the Village Council Office. Most of the social, cultural and educational information was collected through observations and interviews and with the concerned officers and key informants in the village.

District Profile

Gandhinagar district is situated in the fertile Northern plain of Gujarat State (see map in Figure 2). It came into existence in 1964 and in terms of area is the smallest of the nineteen districts of the State. There are 75 villages in the district and the only urban area is the town of Gandhinagar which is the district headquarters as well as the State capital.

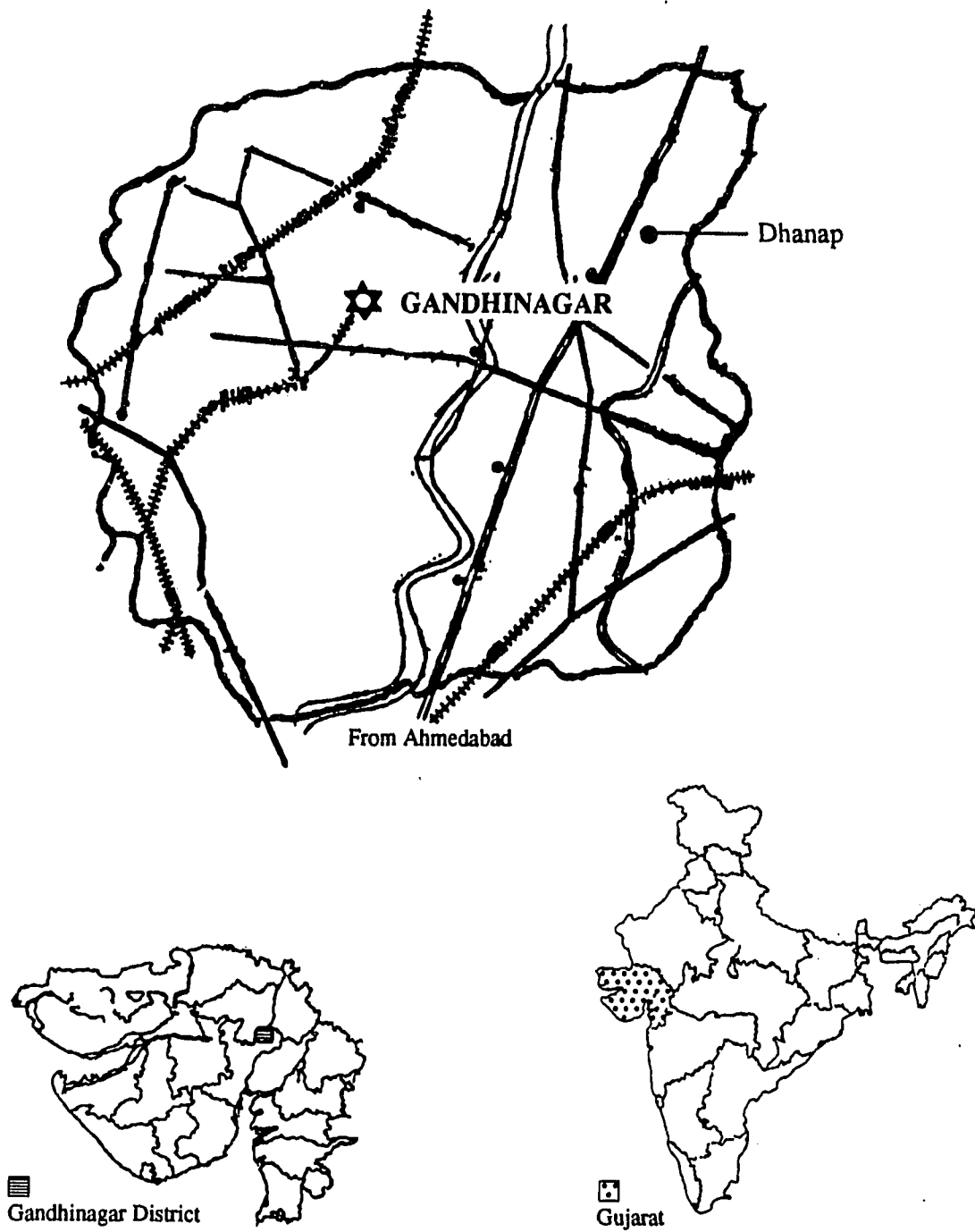


Figure 2. Location of Gandhinagar district in Gujarat and India

The total area of the district is 649 sq. Km. which accounts for 0.33% of the State's total area. The district has a fertile soil and is considered to be agriculturally prosperous. Agriculture is the main occupation - about 50% of the total work force is engaged in agriculture. The main crops grown are rice, wheat, jowar (shorghum), bajri (pearl millet) and pulses. Among non-food crops cotton is widely cultivated in addition to cash crops like sugarcane, tobacco and oilseeds. In terms of industry Gandhinagar is not as advanced as some of its neighboring districts (Government of Gujarat, 1980).

The total population of the district is 289,088, of which 78% live in the rural areas. The sex ratio for the district is 925 females per 1000 males as compared to 945 for the State and 935 for the country. Compared to other districts in the State, Gandhinagar has a small population of Scheduled Castes (7.33%) and the population of Scheduled Tribe (ST) is even smaller (these terms are explained later).

Among the nineteen districts Gandhinagar ranks second in literacy. The literacy rate is 51.48 per cent which is higher than the State average of 43.70 per cent. Literacy rate is higher among all segments of the population (male/female, urban/rural) when compared to the corresponding figures at the State and national level. The literacy level of male and urban population is higher than that of female and rural populations.

During 1983-84 there were 153 primary schools (including private schools in Gandhinagar town), 52 secondary schools, 13 higher secondary schools and 15 other institutions of higher and technical education. In the primary schools the total number of boys and girls enrolled were 30782 and 17374 respectively.

There are four educational institutions for women out of which three are pre-primary and primary teachers training institutions and one physical education school. There is also a rural education center which is affiliated with the State level rural University. It includes a Farm Science Center and an undergraduate college for men and women.

During 1984-85 there were 100 Adult Education centers in the district sponsored by the State Adult Education Programme. The total adult learners in these centers were 3035 - comprising of 599 male and 2436 female learners. In addition to the 100 centers, there were 60 Adult Education centers conducted by voluntary agencies located in two large villages and ten centers run by the rural education center. (Details of these centers given in the next chapter).

Health facilities in the district by the State Health and Family Planning Department includes two Primary Health Centers (PHC) and several sub-centers at the village level. Some of the programs implemented by the department are Health Education Programme and the Maternal and Child Welfare Programme which includes the Applied Nutrition Programme and the Mid-day meal programme for primary school children.

Village Profile

Dhanap, one of the 75 villages in Gandhinagar district is located in the Northeastern region of the district. It is situated approximately 30 Km. from the city of Ahmedabad and 10 Km. from Gandhinagar town.

Dhanap is connected by an approach road of less than one kilometer to the highway from where public transportation to Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar and

other towns is available. The highway is fairly busy with frequently passing trucks, buses, special commuter jeeps, tractors and bullock-carts, all of which are used by the villagers to travel to Gandhinagar and to other villages.

At the village entrance, by the highway, is a tea shop and a barber shop followed by some dry land on both sides of the road leading to the village. Further down, there are houses of the lower castes most of whom are migrants. (A description of the caste system is given later in the chapter). Most of the houses are to the right of this road that leads to the other end of the village where there is a temple - a white circular domed building surrounded by trees and large open space in front of it. The pond behind the temple is mostly dry and buffaloes are usually seen bathing in its muddy waters.

The road leading to the temple then curves right towards the center of the village - the village square - where four lanes from different sections of the village meet. There are four small grocery shops in this area. Next to this is the Primary school and further on the same lane is the village panchayat¹ (village council) office and the cooperative society, both of which are housed in the same building. The lanes branching off from the village square lead to different sections or quarters of households belonging to different castes and are usually identified as a certain caste quarter. Some of the castes have more than one quarter. However, the houses are built close together and except in few cases, there are no distinct boundaries between caste quarters.

The general pattern of housing is similar to that found in most Indian villages in which the central part of the village is occupied by the high and intermediate castes and the houses of the low and the untouchable castes are on the fringes.

In recent years, some of the village elites have built new houses away from the crowded central part and their old houses are either unoccupied or rented by others. A few more houses are also unoccupied due to families migrating to other towns for employment.

Out of the 430 houses in the village 410 are occupied residential households. About 40 percent of these are concrete brick and cement houses. The rest are either hutments of mud walls with thatched roof (of bamboo, reed, grass or wood) or are semi-concrete with brick walls and thatched roofs or metal sheet roofs sometimes covered with country tiles. Flooring in most of these houses is of mud mixed with cow dung. Except for those of the well-to-do, most of the houses are single room units with a small porch and an open courtyard in front where a shelter is often built for the cattle. These houses usually do not have ventilation or sanitation facilities. Cooking is mainly done in the front porch with firewood on handmade mud stoves. People spend most of the time outside the house and the room is mainly used for safety and protection of their belongings, for storing grains and for sleeping during winter and rainy seasons.

The village does not have a drainage system and none of the houses have toilets. People go to the outskirts of the village for nature calls. For bathing, they use the area in front of the house where the water tap is available. A few houses do have newly constructed bathrooms near the front porch; however, due to lack of proper drainage facility, water accumulates in the lanes during monsoons to form muddy pools and is a convenient breeding ground for mosquitos.

Electricity for domestic use came to the village recently; prior to that it was available for agricultural use only. Roughly two-thirds of the houses have

electricity, although the main power is cut off at least once every day in order to save for agricultural use.

The main source of water supply is tube wells. Water pipelines to different localities for household use were installed a few years ago (1981). Taps were installed by some individual households or by a group of households who share the cost and the facility.

"Gujarati" is the spoken and written language of the State. There are several dialects which are spoken variants of standard Gujarati language. People in the rural areas of the district including Dhanap speak one of the dialects which differs slightly from standard Gujarati in terms of vocabulary and accent. In schools however, text books written in standard Gujarati are used.

All the inhabitants of the village are Hindus and they worship Hindu dieties. There is a small population of Muslims and Christians in the district but none in the village. The population of Scheduled castes and other backward class is 82 and 1091 respectively (an explanation of these terms is given later in this chapter).

The village population according to the 1981 records maintained by the village panchayat is given in Table 2.

In an Indian village caste is an important factor that could determine one's area of residence, pattern of housing, occupation and various other aspects of community life. Table 3 gives a distribution of households according to castes which are broadly categorized as high, intermediate and lower castes. The terms used in the study will refer to this classification.

Table 2. Village population and literacy rate

	Total	Male	Female
Population	2462	1226	1236
Literates	984	662	322

The classification of the castes into three major categories--high, intermediate and low--is based on their present position and status in the village and is generally agreed upon by the villagers. The list only represents an approximate order of status and differences do exist when ranking them in order within each of the three categories. The difficulty in arranging the castes in definite hierarchical order arises not only from differences of opinion but as a result of their changing status over a period of time and variations in their status in different villages.² This changing status of castes is usually linked with economic mobility, education, and socio-political factors. Also, as in the case of Dhanap, some of the intermediate castes, especially the artisans, may hold nearly equal status.

According to the traditional classification given below, the artisans were Sudras and were considered low caste but at present, in Dhanap they enjoy a much better status and are considered as intermediate castes. Conversely, the

Table 3. Castewise distribution of households

Caste	No. of Households
<u>High</u>	
Brahmin	10
Banias	1
Darbar	97
Patel	98
<u>Intermediate</u> (Other Backward class - OBC)	
Prajapati (Potter)	2
Valand (Barber)	10
Panchal (Blacksmith)	3
Suthar (Carpenter)	3
Soni (Goldsmith)	1
Thakore/Thakarda	101
Rabari (Herdsman)	16
<u>Low:</u> (scheduled castes)	
Vaghri	20
Raval	25
Chamar (leatherworkers)	12
Harijans or Vankar (sweeper)	11

Thakores who are a sub-group of Kshatriyas (or Rajputs), next only to the Darbars, are considered as one of the backward classes perhaps due to their economic degradation.

The three upper castes--Brahmins, Darbars and Patels--have more or less equal status in the village but in terms of economic and political power the latter two rank above the Brahmins.

Most of the intermediate castes are now identified by the State Government as 'Other Backward Class' (OBC) as a result of a study commission which declared these castes as socially and educationally backward. The study commission's recommendations led to the development of measures for the social and educational upliftment of these caste groups by providing economic benefits for education and employment.

The untouchable castes were given a more respectable name, 'Harijan' meaning 'people of God' by Mahatma Gandhi. These castes are officially categorized as 'Scheduled castes' (SC) and are given special benefits such as land, subsidies, loans, scholarships for study, etc., by the Government for their social and economic upliftment.

The original Hindu four-part classification of castes along with their traditional occupation and status is given below in the precise hierarchical order. Each of the four castes consists of several sub-castes; the ones that are found in the village are given in parenthesis.

Occupational pattern in the village is, to a large extent, still determined by the caste to which one belongs although not as rigidly as it was in the traditional system.

<u>Brahmins:</u>	Priests, teachers.
<u>Kshatriyas:</u>	Warriors (Darbars, Thakores)
<u>Vaishyas:</u>	Merchants, shopkeepers (Bania)
<u>Sudras:</u>	Artisans, craftsmen, barber, goldsmith, carpenter (Valand, Soni, Suthar, Panchal)
untouchables (now called SC)	Leatherworkers, sweepers (Harijans, Chamars, Vankars)

In Dhanap, as in most other villages, irrespective of the caste, the majority are involved in agriculture. More than 90% of the working population is involved in agriculture and agriculture related occupations. Approximately 80% of the households own one or more animals; and as in the case of the landless and the widows, the cattle may be the main or only source of income.

Many agriculturists also derive income from other sources to supplement their income. It is not uncommon for a member of the cultivator family to be engaged in non-agricultural occupations such as business, dairy management, shopkeeping, teaching, administrative and clerical services within or outside the village according to their skill and education. In almost all social groups men have taken to occupations other than their traditional one ranging from professional and administrative to technical services and manual labor either as main or subsidiary occupation.

Those in non-agricultural occupations include eight teachers and 12 shopkeepers. Eleven are servicemen in the village such as priests, workers in Panchayat office, cooperative society, dairy, school, etc. Eight are employed outside the village in transportation, or hold various positions in the State and district level administrative offices. Among some of the artisan castes who

follow their traditional occupation are three barbers, two blacksmiths, two carpenters and one goldsmith.

Among the cultivators are the large land owners (mostly high caste), small and marginal farmers (mostly Thakores and other intermediate castes and few scheduled castes), and the tenants and landless laborers (mostly Thakores and scheduled castes).

A few Brahmins own land but do not cultivate themselves. They are teachers, shopkeepers and dairy owners. The Patels, Darbars and Thakores are mainly cultivators. The first two are the predominant land-owning castes. They also own tractors, threshers, and tube wells and adopt modern agricultural practices. Some of them are engaged in other occupations such as teaching, dairy and other business and trade. Few among them are employed in urban areas in government and non-government organizations. Some Darbars are politically active and one of them is a member of the District Panchayat.

For the majority of the Thakores, agriculture is the only source of income. They are mainly tenants or have small holdings. Very few are employed in other services within and outside the village.

Some of the artisan castes have small land holdings but are usually non-cultivating owners. Many still follow their traditional occupation except in the case of the Prajapati (potter) family, in which the head of the household is employed outside the village.

The Rabaris are mainly cattle breeders. Both men and women are engaged in rearing animals and in processing milk products. Some are also cultivators and in recent years have been employed in other occupations outside

the village. The Vaghris are mostly agricultural laborers and rear goats and other animals.

Among the scheduled castes, the Ravals are traders and vegetable sellers. They own camel-carts and are hired by farmers to carry agricultural products to and from other places.

The Chamars and Vankars (Harijans) are mainly agricultural laborers or small-scale tenants. Very few have small holdings and few follow their traditional occupation (leatherwork and scavenging) as a subsidiary occupation. As a result of the government policy to favour the scheduled castes in public employment, some men have found employment outside the village.

Agricultural Pattern

The village has a total area of 2518 acres, out of which 2222 acres is cultivable land. The land is irrigated by 42 wells and 50 tube wells. The soil is fertile and good for crops like wheat, rice, bajri (a type of millet), cotton, groundnut and other oilseeds and pulses. Seasonal vegetables are also grown by some farmers.

Most land belonging to the large land owners is triple-cropped; the rest is mostly double-cropped. Land holding is to a large extent related to the caste factor with the Patels and Darbars having large holdings and the intermediate and low castes having small holdings or are tenants and landless laborers. The number of persons in each of these category is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Size of land holding by sex

	Male	Female	Total
Big Farmers	135	-	135
Small & Marginal farmers	160	15	175
Landless laborers	62	73	235

The last two categories are not discrete as some of the marginal farmers and laborers are also tenants and some of the small farmers have leased out their land and are not cultivators. The number in such categories were not available from the records maintained by the farmers cooperative society.

The female landowners are mostly widows. Roughly about 43 percent farmers own 73 percent of the cultivable land, and the remaining 57 percent own only 27 percent. Sharecropping is a common mode of agricultural practice. Much of the land, especially of those engaged in other non-agricultural occupations is leased out. The tenants are mostly Thakores or belong to the scheduled castes who have very small or no holdings of their own.

The landless laborers are mostly Thakores and the scheduled castes. The wages paid to the laborers range from eight to ten rupees per day depending upon season and type of work. This is slightly below the minimum wage prescribed by the government for agricultural laborers. The practice of providing one meal to the laborers, as is done in some other villages, is not followed in Dhanap, although they are provided with tea and 'bidis' (locally made

cigarettes). There is no discrimination in the wages paid to male and female laborers for the same tasks. However, wages do differ according to the type of agricultural activity. During agricultural seasons, the big farmers usually prefer to import laborers from the tribal areas who are paid on a contract basis and hence less than the wages demanded by the local laborers. As a result of this many lower castes who do not own land are unemployed and are forced to look for alternative means of employment.

Animal husbandry is a major agriculture related work in which a majority of households are involved. Some of the upper caste households own ten or more cows, buffaloes and bullocks. Some of the artisan castes who are non-agriculturists also own cattle which provides them with additional income and for some among the poor households it may be the main or only source of income. In recent years, many have taken advantage of the government scheme that provides subsidies to the needy, the destitutes, widows and the economically backward communities (ST, SC and OBC) for purchasing cattle.

Local Organizations and Infrastructure

There are several formal and informal organizations in the village serving the economic, political, health, social, religious and educational needs of the community. These include the village Panchayat, the cooperative society, the dairy, a dispensary, primary and secondary school, Adult Education Centers and a religious club. The village panchayat or village council is the smallest but the most important unit of local self government in rural India. The number of members vary from 7-15. The Gujarat Panchayat's Act provides for reservation of at least two seats for women in the village Panchayat. In Dhanap, the two

women members have never attended any of the panchayat meetings. In one case the women's husband attends the meetings on her behalf as it is not considered courteous to sit with men in a meeting.

According to the amended Act the Sarpanch or village headman is to be elected by ballot by qualified voters of the village. In Dhanap however, elections have never taken place. Instead, the headman was nominated by panchayat members. At the time of the study the village headman was a Patel who was recently elected. For several years in the past the position was held by a Darbar who decided to give up the headmanship due to a dispute between the Thakores and the Darbars. A village headman holds a powerful position and is a major link between the villagers and the block and district level administration.

The village has a cooperative credit society which is housed in the same building as the village panchayat office. The cooperative credit societies were set up in rural areas with the purpose of solving problems of agrarian nature. This plays an important role in the entire cooperative structure. It gives short-term and medium-term loans to small, marginal and big farmers for purchase of farm equipments, fertilizers and seeds. Landless laborers are also given loans up to a certain amount. Another important function of the cooperative society is the sale of essential commodities like wheat, rice, sugar, oil, fertilizers, seeds and cattle feed at reasonable rates fixed by the government. The society has 233 members out of which 118 are big farmers, 25 are small and 90 are marginal farmers. There are six women members, all of whom are widows. All of the nine executive members are men. One of the important functionaries in the village is the Village Level Worker (VLW) who is mainly an agriculture extension worker. He is employed by the District Agriculture Extension

Department and his main role is to provide timely and relevant agricultural information to farmers. He visits the village once a week and occasionally holds meetings which are attended only by men, mostly big and small farmers.

Another functionary is the veterinarian (private), who pays occasional visits or when called in case of an emergency. The village has three private dairies which are mainly milk collection centers owned by the three upper castes. The cooperative dairy operated by the District Cooperative Union had closed down sometime ago as it was running at a loss due to competition with the three private dairies. Milk collection takes place twice a day and the milk from each household is tested for its fat content to determine the rate of payment. Payment is made in cash once every two weeks. As most of the work related to animal care, including milking the cattle, is done by women, they are closely linked to the dairy and are aware of its functions and mode of payment.

Health Facilities

The village has one private clinic visited by a doctor who lives in a nearby town. An Ayurvedic practitioner infrequently pays a visit and gives free service to villagers.³ The Public Health Department of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare provides basic health services in the district through the Primary Health Centers (PHC) and sub-centers that are set up in larger villages. The National and State level schemes and programs of health and family planning are implemented in villages through the PHCs and its sub-centers by various functionaries who work at the village level. At the time of the study the village did not have a sub-center but was to be set up soon and a small building

for the sub-center was under construction. The various functionaries appointed by the PHC to provide health and family planning services in the village include:

(1) A Community health worker (CHW) who is a resident of the village. The CHW in the village is a Brahmin women who, like all CHWs, had received her training at the PHC. Her job consists of maintaining a medicine kit for first aid and minor illnesses like malaria, diarrhea, headache, fever, vomiting, etc. Her function also includes providing advice to villagers on nutrition and hygiene. She had a very low credibility due to her doubtful mental stability and hence was rarely approached by people except for specific medicines for headache, stomachache and other minor health problems.

(2) An Auxiliary Nurse & Midwife (ANM) visits the village four days a week. She is an extension education worker for the Family Planning and Maternal and Child Health Programme. She is a crucial link between the PHC and the villagers. She is assisted by a voluntary worker who is a traditional midwife in the village and is paid on a per case basis. Her role is to motivate women to adopt family planning measures and to provide help during childbirth.

(3) The Malaria worker - who is a multipurpose worker, visits the village once every fifteen days, keeps records of malaria cases, collects their blood samples for testing, and administers medicine to malaria patients.

(4) A Physician is appointed by the Directorate of Health to visit certain days a week, but his visits are infrequent as there is a private physician who attends regularly.

Health practices Generally people go to a private clinic in the village or in a nearby village in case of malaria, cholera, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, etc. Many prefer to visit the doctor in the neighboring village due to his credibility developed over a long period of time. In case of diarrhea and stomachache home remedies are preferred initially.

Some of the Thakores and lower castes, especially the vaghris, have faith in the magico-religious practices of the traditional medicine men and consult him in case of dizziness, fits and persistent fever. These symptoms are believed to be caused by the wrath of the Goddess and therefore cannot be cured by medicine.

None of the villagers would consult a doctor or a health worker in case of chicken pox or measles as these two are believed to be given and cured by the Goddess. The patient is usually kept indoors until the rashes disappear and then offerings to the Goddess and gifts to the priest are given.

Other formal institutions in the village include a pre-primary and a primary school, a secondary school and two Adult Education Centers for women. These will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

There is a small library which in essence is a few cabinets full of books in the main office of the primary school. It is rarely used by the literate population and almost never by women.

Among the informal organizations in the village are: (a) a religious club and (b) a welfare trust formed by the leaders of the village. The religious club is

an informal group formed by some of the high and intermediate caste members - both men and women. Some of their activities include raising funds for a 'good cause' like providing text books to needy students and organizing trips to places of religious significance. Funds are raised by members who voluntarily work on a piece of land donated by some of the large landowners. The women members of this club have formed their own sub-group which meets once a week and on certain occasions to sing devotional songs and to read and discuss religious books.

The charitable trust is formed by the male leaders of the village most of whom are also Panchayat members. The trust provides funds for the pre-primary and the secondary school. In the past they have organized recreational activities for school children and raised funds for building the temple and an extension to the primary school by arranging film shows. As is the story in almost every village in the region, the youth club did not function and was therefore closed down. Occasionally films are shown by the health and family planning department and the agriculture department which are attended by men and some children and very few women. Meetings held by the family planning and department are attended by men only.

Women's Profile

As the entire population of the village follow Hindu religion, most of the customs and social practices are basically similar among different caste groups.

Marriage and Family

The majority of the families are of nuclear type. Very few joint families existed in the village and are found mainly among the large land owning class and some of the upper castes. With increasing modernization, urbanization and other socio-economic changes resulting from education and migration, the joint family system has become rare in recent years. The type of family most commonly found was patrilineal with the males sharing the property and managing the land jointly but having separate residences.

A women after marriage almost always enters the home of her parents-in-law and lives with them in the initial years until her husband sets up his separate residence.

Regarding marriage customs, the rites and ceremonies performed are generally the same among all Hindus although they may vary somewhat among different caste groups. Marriage customs too have undergone changes to a certain extent as a result of class mobility, modernization and education. As a rule the Hindus are supposed to marry within their caste or sub-caste and the selection of the spouse, who is always from another village, is made by parents or other elders in the family.

Child marriage, although abolished by law is still prevalent among the Patels and some of the lower castes. (The custom is common only among the particular sub-caste of Patels found in some villages of the district). Among the Patels in the village many children in the age group 6-14 were married. The married girl however, is not sent to her in-laws until she is fourteen years of age or later. Among other castes age of marriage is usually between 14-21 for girls and between 16-23 for boys.

The custom of dowry in marriage persists inspite of the Act prohibiting giving and taking of dowry. Both the amount of dowry and the rigidity of the custom weighs heavy among the upper castes, especially the Patels and Darbars, than any other castes. Apart from dowry the expenses on marriage, which is a must even among the intermediate and lower castes, could often exceed the annual income of a household. Taking a loan from the local money lender or the employer-landlord for meeting marriage expenses is common among the Thakores and some of the low castes which leads to heavy debts and often landlessness. Generally the expenses on the marriage of a girl are higher than that of a boy except in the case of a few lower castes. This has an important bearing on schooling as parents prefer to save money for her wedding instead of spending on her education. Divorce is permitted by law but the cases are usually settled by the local council or a caste council which consists of a few village leaders. Widow remarriage is permitted among most of the intermediate and low caste but not among the high castes and is totally forbidden among the Darbars.

Patterns of Interaction

In Dhanap, social interaction is not as rigidly determined by caste and class boundaries as it traditionally used to be. Except for marriages and dining together which take place exclusively within one's own caste or sub-caste, interactions between members of various caste and class regularly take place. Nevertheless, a women's freedom of movement and the extent and type of interaction with other men and women varies somewhat across class, caste and age groups. For the majority of the women interaction is limited to neighbors

who, due to caste division of households, belong to the same caste. However, as mentioned earlier, only some of the caste quarters belonging to the Patels, Darbars, Thakores and the SC are segregated. The rest of the houses, especially those of the intermediate castes including some of the Thakore households, are located close to some of the upper castes. Casual and informal intermingling among women of these households in the central part of the village can be frequently observed. Barriers are even weaker among children who could be seen playing with other children in the neighborhood irrespective of caste or class.

The women's religious club is a good example of intercaste interactions. The meeting usually takes place in the home of one of the members who belongs to the artisan caste (Panchal and Prajapati) and is attended by women from all the four upper castes. Segregation for such social and religious activities is practiced more between the lower and the rest of the castes than between the upper and the intermediate groups. However, attitudes towards other caste groups do differ among certain households. Some Patel and Darbar women, for instance, said they would not participate in a group activity if there are women from other castes that are lower than their own.

In general, women are subjected to norms that restrict their freedom of movement and interaction with men and women outside their home. For travel outside the village on occasions such as attending a marriage, visiting a doctor or relative or going to the fair, a woman is always to be escorted by a male member of the family or an older women. Errands within the village to the local grocery shop, or to work or visit a relative, are permitted. Wandering in

public places (like the tea shop or village square) is totally uncalled for and may affect her reputation and that of the family.

The rules apply to all women but with differing degrees of rigor for some categories of women than others. For instance, women among the lower classes (labor class) and elderly women among all classes enjoy greater freedom than the young and those of the elite class (especially Darbars). Rules are more rigid for the unmarried girls as any behavior outside the norm may affect their reputation and consequently their marriage prospects. This is one of the reasons for withdrawal of girls from school when they reach high school age. Young married women among all caste groups have the least freedom of movement and her interaction is limited to other women in the neighborhood. A young married woman would generally take up chores in and around the house like cooking, child care, tending cattle, etc; while tasks requiring outdoor trips and interaction with men outside the home are carried out by her mother-in-law or other senior women or male members in the family.

As mentioned earlier, among the upper classes, Darbar women are most restricted whereas Patel women enjoy comparatively more freedom and take active part in agricultural and other social activities, and have more opportunity to interact with men and women outside their homes. The same applies to most women in the intermediate castes. Women in the lower and Scheduled castes who work in the fields and have to go out for minor purchases and other errands have greater opportunity to interact and exchange information with men and women outside their homes and neighborhoods. The Raval women,

for instance, may go to Gandhinagar and to nearby villages to purchase and sell vegetables, and thus have fewer restrictions imposed on them by their community.

In the nuclear family today, fewer restrictions apply to women than those in the joint family. However, as most women live with their in-laws in the initial years of their marriage, they are expected to observe certain code of behavior that applies to all young daughters-in-law in the village. She would hesitate to sit and talk with visitors in the presence of her in-laws, and would most probably remain indoors or would take a seat on the floor and not participate in the conversation. Decisions about her participation in work or other activities are generally made by her mother-in-law or her husband. However, as her children grow up and she gains seniority, she attains more freedom and better status in the family.

Women who work for wages do not necessarily enjoy greater freedom. A young woman is usually accompanied by her husband or other women in the family or neighborhood while going to work in the field. One of the Adult Education instructor, for instance, who is a young married woman living with her in-laws, was rarely seen outside her courtyard and was allowed to take up the job as the class could be arranged in their own courtyard. She attended the training in Gandhinagar for a few days when accompanied by another woman from the village who also participated in the training.

On the other hand, the primary school teacher, who is a young married Harijan (SC) woman, lives in a nuclear family, and has less inhibitions about having a conversation with men at work and in the neighborhood.

Roles and Activities

Although it is difficult to classify women's work into definite categories, the various tasks they carried out could be broadly categorized into (a) economic activities and (b) household activities.

Economic activities are of two major types, namely agriculture and agriculture related activities, and non-agricultural activities.

Interestingly, in a rural society where a women's work is concerned, there is no clear demarcation between domestic and agricultural work. Many of the agricultural tasks such as cleaning and processing of grains (usually carried out in or near the home) are considered as part of her household chores. A couple working on their own land would normally report the occupation of the male as agriculture but that of women as 'housewife' or 'household work'. Similarly, tending cattle, an economically productive activity which mainly involves women, is considered part of her household work. As women are mostly engaged in unpaid work, their contribution to the household economy is usually unrecognized. The underestimation of their economic contribution and the emphasis on their 'domestic role' perpetuates their secondary status in the world of work. The views expressed by men seemed to strengthen these attitudes (Sharma, 1984). The problem of measuring the female work force stems from this non-recognition of women's unpaid work in the unorganized sector. In the last decade this problem has been discussed by various authors (Sharma, 1984; Khan & Ayesha, 1982; Sharma, 1980; Mukhopadhyay, 1984).

Non-agricultural activities In Dhanap, as in all rural areas, very few women are employed as paid workers in non-agricultural jobs. Only seven women in the village were in paid employment in the non-agriculture sector.

These include one primary school teacher, one peon in high school, one nursery school teacher, two Adult Education instructors, one Community Health Worker, and one midwife. Of these only the first two were full-time permanent workers, and the rest were part-time workers employed on a temporary basis. A few poor women worked for wages at the homes of the well-to-do for washing clothes and utensils.

Apart from wage earners there are a few women who are self-employed. These include eight vegetable sellers and three shopkeepers who work part-time at the grocery shop owned by the family. Among paid workers in agriculture, official figures show that only 73 women are agriculture laborers. However, this figure only includes the full-time wage earners and does not take into account a large number of agricultural workers who are part-time or seasonal laborers and those who work on their own land. Women form a large proportion of this category, but there is no official record of these figures.

Agricultural activities The various agricultural activities in which women are involved include sowing, weeding, transplanting, and most of the post-harvest activities. In short they are involved in most of the agricultural tasks except ploughing, spraying pesticides, threshing (machine) and all tasks that require operating farm machinery like tractors and tube wells.

Women in large land owning cultivator households do not work in the fields. They may engage in some agricultural tasks of supervisory nature related to cleaning, processing and storage of grains. Patel women are comparatively more active in agricultural and animal care activities near their home, although they may not work in the fields.

Among the small and marginal farmers who do cultivate their own land, the amount of women's involvement varies according to the structure and circumstances of the family, amount of land owned or rented, and whether or not there is an additional source of income apart from agriculture. Caste may be another factor determining women's participation as this class (small and marginal farmers) includes almost all caste groups ranging from Patels and Darbars to the scheduled castes. The Thakores form the majority in this class. They may be actively involved in working full-time in the field, or may work part-time or only during seasons, or may go to the fields only to carry food for the male members and to bring fodder for the cattle.

Among the tenant and tenant-cum-landless class both men and women work in the field. They may be daily, monthly, or casual wage earners; or they may be contract laborers and as such are either paid in cash or, as in the case of sharecroppers, are paid fixed portion of the produce. Women in this group are most overworked with agricultural labour and household work. Very often they have to work on farms that are 2-3 miles away. Older children are an asset in households in which both parents are involved in agriculture. They are expected to tend cattle and their younger siblings, and help with minor household chores and errands. According to the SC women it is difficult to find work as farmers prefer to hire labour from outside (tribals) as they are willing to work for lower wages. This leaves the lower caste women unemployed since they do not have the skills for other non-agriculture employment. One of the groups of SC women (Ravals) have made a successful attempt at self employment. They are engaged in selling vegetables, and the men in these

households have acquired loans to purchase carts and livestock to start their own trade and transport.

Irrespective of caste or class most women in the cattle owning households are responsible for tending milch animals. The task involves feeding and milking the cattle, cleaning the shed, fetching and preparing fodder and taking the animal to pastures and to water. Upper class households with more than two or three animals often employ a person to help with these tasks. In such cases the women's work would be limited to processing milk products and sometimes feeding the animal.

On the other hand, women belonging to the lower classes would, in addition to the above tasks, go to the fields to cut fodder or take the animal to pastures and prepare cow dung cakes for fuel. Some of the women in poor households also tend animals for others to supplement their income. Men are least involved in tending animals except for taking milk to the dairy or, in some cases, may milk the animal. Children provide a helping hand by way of getting fodder, taking the animal to water or for grazing, and taking milk to the local dairy. The responsibility of tending cattle lies more on children whose parents work full-time in the fields.

Household activities Whether a woman is involved in agriculture or not her prime responsibility is to cook and take care of the house and children. The numerous household chores she performs daily include cooking, cleaning the house, washing clothes and utensils and tending children.

Roles differ somewhat across class groups with women of the upper class performing fewer tasks, although cooking, child care and some cleaning is done by women of all caste and class.

Women who are engaged in agricultural labor carry out these activities over and above the farm work. They may also have to fetch fire wood and occasionally redo the mud stove and the flooring with a mixture of mud and cow dung.

The pattern of life and daily activities of women among the non-agriculture households differ somewhat from those engaged in agriculture and animal care. Especially women in the artisan castes and the Brahmin and Bania households who are not employed have more leisure time after completing household chores like cooking and cleaning.

Endnotes

1. Panchayat is an assembly of arbitrators (usually five) who settle petty village disputes. The Panchayati Raj formed on principles of democratic decentralization is a three-tier system introduced at the district, block and village level. The members are elected by adult franchise by qualified voters of the village.
2. For more information about the caste system and its changing status see A. Beteille, 1965, Caste, Class and Power, Berkeley: University of California Press; also see S. Milton & B. Cohn, 1968, Structure and Change in Indian Society, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company; for more on caste and social mobility see M. N. Srinivas, 1966, Social Change in Modern India, Berkeley: University of California Press.
3. The traditional medical system in India is named "Ayurveda", or "knowledge of long life". It is still practiced in India especially in the rural areas.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN

This chapter discusses the educational status--both formal and nonformal--with respect to needs of women in these areas. In order to identify the nonformal education needs of women in the context of existing educational infrastructures, a description of the formal and nonformal educational institutions and programs is outlined with an emphasis on problems of implementation, access, and participation. The perceptions and attitudes of different classes and groups towards these institutions and towards women's education is also discussed.

Literacy

The total number of literates in the village is 984 (40%), of which 322 are females and 662 are males (according to records provided by the village Panchayat). Literacy figures among women in the village is higher than rural women at the State and national level but lower than those at the district level. Table 5 shows the rate of literacy as percent of total population by sex at the village, district, state and national level. In addition, literacy figures of the village according to the 1971 and 1981 data is also given to show the attainment of literacy during the decade.

The figures show a significant gap between male and female literacy rates at all levels. Reasons for the low level of literacy among women can best be understood with reference to the low enrollment and high dropout rate at the primary level. These are discussed later in this section.

Table 5. Literacy rate among the village population in comparison with district, state and country

	Male	Female	Total
<u>1971^a</u>			
Dhanap	43.20	18.50	31.50
<u>1981</u>			
Dhanap ^b	54.0	26.05	39.96
Gandhinagar District ^c (rural)	60.09	33.65	47.25
Gujarat (rural) ^c	47.85	24.06	36.20
India (rural) ^c	40.79	17.9	29.65

^aCensus of India, 1971.

^b1981 village data made available by the village panchayat, Dhanap.

^cCensus of India, 1981.

Formal Education

The village has a primary school (grades 1-7), a secondary school (grades 8-10) and a pre-primary or nursery school. Higher secondary schools (grades 11 & 12) are located in larger villages that are 5-10 km. away, and students either walk

or take a bus or use other means of transportation. There are eight students (only boys) from the village who attend higher secondary school.

The nursery school (preschool) was run with a grant from a voluntary agency and had an enrollment of 35 children (aged 3-5), although it was observed that attendance was usually between seven and fifteen. It was also noted that only children of the high caste and a few intermediate castes attended the nursery school.

The teacher, who was an unmarried young woman from the Darbar community, felt that the people in the village did not see pre-primary education as being essential and therefore took no interest in enrolling their children. She had to persuade the parents to send their children to school and had to make several visits to their homes to collect the small fee of 3 rupees per month.

As it appeared, there were no special facilities for the nursery. Children gathered from 10 am to 2 pm in the temple premises under the tree except on rainy days and whenever it was not convenient for the teacher. The following year the nursery had closed down. According to the teacher, the grants from the voluntary agency had stopped due to reasons not known to her.

Both the primary and secondary school have concrete brick and cement buildings. The primary school building is surrounded by trees and a wide open space, and some of the classes are occasionally held outside. In recent years, a few more rooms were constructed for the primary school with the help of funds raised through activities organized by the local voluntary group.

School hours are from 11 am to 5 pm. with a recess for lunch. There are chairs and desks for teachers, whereas children sit on floormats. Some of the classes in the secondary school have benches for students.

Teaching materials commonly used are blackboards and charts. Students write on a slate. Those in the upper primary and secondary school use note books. There are maps, charts and demonstration kits that are seldom used.

Repetition and recitation are the primary teaching methods with hardly any attempt by teachers to encourage questions from students or have a discussion with them. Homework is given everyday, but with little interest and guidance from parents it is often not done. Punishment for not doing homework or not answering questions correctly in class ranges from rebuke to beating with a ruler. For some children the latter is enough to frighten them so as to permanently drop out of school.

The language used in teaching and in the textbooks is standard Gujarati. The syllabus and the textbooks are the same as those used in urban schools.

In the year the study was conducted, the primary school had eleven teachers, including one female teacher who is a married Harijan (SC) woman from the same village. Three of the male teachers, including the Headmaster, live in the village, and the rest commute from nearby villages. The secondary school is staffed by five male teachers, only one of whom lives in the village.

Enrollment: Total enrollment in the primary school in 1984-85 was 404, out of which 179 were girls. Enrollment of girls was higher than boys in the first two grades but dropped consistently from third grade onwards and was only one-fourth that of boys in grade seven. Among boys, enrollment through grade seven was more or less consistent with highest enrollment in the third grade. A high total enrollment in third grade was due to a high failure rate in this grade and due to the policy of promoting all students in the first and second grade on the basis of attendance.

The secondary school had a total enrollment of 115, and there were only six girls. All the girls were from the upper castes. Approximately 65% of the students come from two neighboring villages that do not have a secondary school. The number of students from the village attending higher secondary school and college located outside the village was eight and three respectively. None of the girls in the village attended these institutions.

Attendance in secondary school is better than in the primary school. In the latter there is a wide gap between registration and actual attendance. As primary education is compulsory, all children in the 6-11 age group have to be registered. A notice is issued to parents of children in this age group if they are absent for several days. After three such notices if the child does not attend school, a legal action can be taken against the parents. However, school authorities are aware of the social and economic conditions and are generally sympathetic to the parents, and advice them to send their children to school, occasionally, to avoid legal complications.

Average attendance during the 1983-84 school year was 284 out of the total enrollment of 404 children with lowest attendance (196) in June, which is the peak agricultural season. These are official figures; real figures could be even lower.

Low attendance in Primary school is typically found among the backward classes, especially among the scheduled castes, in spite of the fact that education at this level is free. There are various factors - social, cultural, economic and attitudinal - that affect attendance of children among all castes and classes.

In order to improve the level of attendance at the primary stage, the State government has introduced the scheme of mid-day meals. However, as in many

other villages, the scheme was facing several problems--administrative and functional (such as the availability of cooking ingredients and utensils, complaints about the quality of food, etc) and was temporarily terminated. Incentives are also offered in the form of scholarship to cover the cost of books and supplies and uniform to the SC and other backward class students at the upper primary and secondary level but these seem less attractive compared to the wages that can be earned (up to Rs. 8 per day) by those above eleven years of age. Some are not able to take advantage of these benefits due to economic and pedagogical reasons discussed below.

Various factors - economic, social, cultural and pedagogical - are responsible for the low attendance and high dropout rate among girls at the primary level that contributes to the high illiteracy rate among women.

In the village, during the year of the study, there were 32 girls enrolled in grade I and only six in grade VII.

Economic factor was the main barrier to education among the backward class. Among poor households it affected the schooling of both boys and girls. Even though education at the primary level is free, some expenses are incurred for books, supplies, a clean pair of clothes, etc. Such investments, particularly for girls' education, is not considered worthwhile as they are after all expected to engage in agriculture and household work and would get married and leave. Whereas boys will be able to use their education for finding work outside and hence there will be a financial return to the family.

Among families engaged in agricultural labour, girls as young as 8-11 years are withdrawn from school, especially during peak agricultural season to help with household chores and care of younger siblings. When the girls are a little

older, they tend cattle and cook and carry food to family members working in the fields. Often the entire family lives on the farm during this season. This leads to irregular attendance and poor performance in school and eventually results in failure and dropout. As scholarships to SC and other backward classes are given on the basis of attendance and performance, girls seldom qualify for them. Seasonal migration among some lower classes, such as the Vaghri, who camp by the riverside for a few months to grow melon and vegetables, is another reason for low attendance and dropout rate.

Among middle class households girls are educated at least up to primary level, although there were some dropouts at the upper primary level. Very few had attended secondary school. There are fewer restrictions on girls working for wages outside among the artisan castes and in a few households girls were educated up to eighth grade with an expectation that in case of future financial crises she might be able to find work.

Where economic constraints were not a problem, as in the upper classes, girls were educated to a higher level--high school or at least upper primary level--more for the sake of status than with an expectation for employment as women in this socio-economic class do not work outside for wages.

Although the level of education desired for sons and daughters varied somewhat among different social groups, parents consistently desired higher education for their sons than daughters. For instance the Sarpanch (village headman) had admitted his sons in a residential school in the city for better quality education, but sent his daughters to the local school. Most women respondents from the SC and other backward classes said that girls should be educated up to a certain level so that they can read and write (grade 4-5), and so

that after marriage they can write letters to their parents. Most respondents in this class did not think education beyond this level was important for girls as they are not going to be employed in work other than agriculture.

The level of education desired for daughters by women respondents from middle and upper class ranged from upper primary to high school. Many of them mentioned that if the girl is bright and sincere about school work they would like to educate her to a level she wants to or can--secondary or higher secondary level.

Besides economic factors affecting education of girls among the lower classes, there is also a traditional belief (especially SC) that education is not meant for them and that it is a prerogative of the higher castes - Brahmins, Patels, Darbars.

Among some of the castes, especially Thakores, the typical response of women was that "we would like to educate our daughters but in our caste girls are not (not supposed to be) given much education". It was found that even when personal views were in favour of education of girls, social norms took precedence and the fear of alienation resulting from breaking such traditional norms prevented them from educating the daughters beyond a certain level. Some also believed that education would make the girls too independent and increase their demands, whereas social norms required them to be less demanding and subservient to men. As a man from the Thakore community expressed, "if a girl is highly educated she will demand for more clothes and cosmetics, would want to go to movies and will not listen to her husband; it is better if she does not have much education."

Parents from both middle and upper classes believed that if daughters are given higher education they would have to find a groom for her who is also highly educated, which they said is not always easy. Even the headmaster of the primary school (a Patel), whose son attends a college, held this view.

Most women, even those who valued education of girls and felt that girls should be educated, believed it is good for them, but it is more important for them to be trained in domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, animal care, etc., so that they will be able to manage their households more effectively. The majority of them did not see any direct relationship between formal education and effective home management. Only a few educated women from the upper class perceived the advantage of formal education for girls and believed that even though girls may not work outside, education will help them manage their household better, they will not be cheated while shopping, and will be able to help their children with school work and give them better education.

Besides social and economic constraints there were structural and attitudinal constraints that affected the enrollment of girls at the secondary level. Women from the upper castes (Darbar and Patel) reported that "the atmosphere in our village is not good; there is a lot of eve-teasing going on by boys which may affect the girl's reputation even if she is innocent." They gave example of another village where people were more "disciplined", there was no mischief by boys and therefore many girls attended secondary school. They even mentioned that if there was a separate secondary school for girls in the village as in some large villages, many parents would send their daughters to school. Having female teachers instead of male teachers in the secondary school would also

increase the enrollment of girls. At the primary level though, it did not matter if there were male teachers.

Attitudes towards school and teachers imposed additional barriers to enrollment of both boys and girls. It was found that parents did not have favorable attitude towards the local school and teachers. According to them, teachers, especially in the primary school, do not teach; they sit and gossip; children play, waste time and come back; they do not learn anything.

Many were of the opinion that the quality of education had deteriorated over the years. As some of the men and women who were in their forties and fifties said that in their days even those with education up to 2nd and 3rd grade could read and write fluently and do arithmetic problems accurately. But today children in 7th grade could not do so. One of the high school teachers too had similar opinion about children's reading and writing ability. A few Patel families preferred to send their sons to schools in cities with the hope that they would get better education.

Most children did not find school to be an attractive place and often refused to attend. Some parents whose children dropped out early in primary school said they had enrolled their children and had forced and even beaten them to attend school; but they came back and refused to go again.

Teachers expressed their helplessness saying that there is very little they can do when parents are not interested and students are too irregular. Many students are truants who may attend school in the morning but disappear after recess.

A few teachers reported that in spite of low enrollment among girls, those who are able to attend school regularly are more attentive in class and serious about school work than boys.

A few adolescent girls who were illiterate regretted having dropped out of school, but thought it was too late to attend primary school at their age as it would be embarrassing to be in a class with children who are much younger to them. This clearly indicates a need for adult literacy.

Adult Literacy

It was found that the majority of those who had two-three years of formal education and had acquired some literacy skills had now lapsed into illiteracy or semi-literacy and could barely read and write a few words. Most women said they could manage without literacy skills as long as they had some numeracy skills that helped them deal with minor day-to-day cash transactions. For any complicated calculations, regarding wages, they would check with some male member in the family or neighborhood who were educated. The only problem they faced was while travelling out of the village when they could not read the signs on the bus and bus station, and thus have to ask someone to read it for them.

Some women regretted having dropped out of school and wished they had at least learned to read and write. When asked whether they would consider learning now if given an opportunity, almost half of the respondents said it would not be of much use and it was too late to start learning now. Little over half of the respondents said they would like to learn if the time and place were

convenient to them but were still reluctant and did not seem enthusiastic about acquiring literacy skills. As one of the Thakore women remarked, "we would go to the class if someone teaches us, but what use will it be now to learn to read and write?" Even among those who had registered for the Adult Education class, about half of them had similar attitude toward literacy. Hence the need for literacy skills among majority of the respondents was not very strong.

Among the 25 women respondents 10 did not have any formal education at all, 13 had less than 4th grade education and two had 7th grade education. Eight of them said they dropped out of school due to work at home and on the farm, eleven said they themselves did not like to go or decided to drop out because none of the girls in the neighborhood attended school. Two of the respondents said they did not attend school because their parents did not want them to.

Only three of the 25 respondent could read and write fluently. Twelve had some literacy skills or were semi-literate (could write their name and a few words); and ten could not read and write at all. However, 22 of the respondents said they could do simple calculations in their head and two said they could carry out any calculations required in their day to day living such as keep accounts from selling milk at the dairy, purchase grocery, pay bus fares, etc.

Interestingly, the use of literacy skill is, to a certain extent, determined by one's status in relation to the upper castes. Two of the respondents from the Thakore community who had learned to write their name said they still preferred to give thumb impression (for instance on any application form at the Panchayat) as they would be embarrassed to sign their name in the presence of

men from high status groups. The episode implies that the "power of literacy" is to be curtailed in the presence of the "powerful" !

Nonformal Education

During the period of fieldwork two nonformal education programs were offered in the village, namely; (1) the Adult Education Programme (AEP), and (2) the Home Science training programme. Both of these were exclusively for women, the former was a long-term (10 month) program whereas the latter was a three-day training session.

Observational data is available only on the Home Science training programme as the AEP was unofficially terminated prior to the beginning of fieldwork. However, this information was not available then and was discovered only during the course of the fieldwork. Some observational data on AEP was gathered from a neighboring village where a one-day visit was made and will be referred to later.

There were no other educational programs of nonformal nature offered in the village for women by any of the government or non-government agencies during the year the study was conducted. People recalled films being shown by the Health & Family Welfare department and the Agriculture department during the previous year. Some meetings and camps conducted by the Health department were held at the health sub-center located in a larger village about 10 km. from Dhanap. These were mainly for male leaders. According to the Auxiliary Nurse & Midwife, whenever meetings are organized in the village only men attend, women usually feel embarrassed to attend when information

about family planning is given. Even for films very few women are present. They have to be approached personally for such issues.

The absence of any women's organization such as a women's club, which is a common feature in many villages of the size of Dhanap, or any planned educational activity by a voluntary or government organization, was surprising. There could be several reasons for this, as I gathered from interviews with people in the village and officials at the district and institutional level. As this directly affects the access of women to nonformal education programs, an inquiry into the reasons for lack of such activities became necessary.

The first reason is that the criteria for the selection of villages set by different voluntary organizations and government and semi-government agencies for implementing their programs are such that villages like Dhanap are systematically excluded from their list. For instance, many development programs give priority to villages that are backward and underdeveloped both agriculturally and in terms of high proportion of Scheduled caste and other backward classes. Another procedure followed by some institutions such as the Agriculture training center was to select a few villages located closer to the center for conducting intensive work and then gradually extending the program to a few other villages that are underdeveloped. In either situation Dhanap was not included in their list.

However, a village could be selected by an institute or government agency if there is a demand from the local authorities. It was found that Dhanap was not among those villages either. What appeared from discussions with local leaders and informants was that they (leaders) had never invited any outside development agencies to implement their projects in general. Needless to say,

the idea of women's program never occurred to them. The Sarpanch seemed indifferent and less enthusiastic for planning activities for women. This was observed on two different occasions; from an individual interview with him and when one of the staff members from the Agriculture training center approached him for organizing the three-day Home Science training program for women.

Many of the woman informants too mentioned that such development programs are not possible in their village mainly because the leaders are not interested. According to them anyone trying to arrange a program in their village, even the folk drama groups are not welcomed by the leaders. One of the women informants from the upper caste emphatically said that "in our village, development of women will never take place because they (men and leaders in particular) are not interested in doing anything for women and they will not let others do it either". She also mentioned that this was part of the reason why the Adult Education program was not functioning in their village.

Some informants, especially the leaders, blamed women themselves for their lack of interest in educational activities. A few women too said that they (especially Patel women) are only interested in agricultural work and keep themselves busy with it as it brings financial returns and are not interested in learning anything.

A few informants, both men and women, attributed the lack of such programs or the non-functioning of programs to the heterogeneous nature of the population in terms of caste. They described it as a "three-party village" (Patels, Darbars and Thakores) in which leaders of one group or caste may not be interested in the welfare of other groups or castes and therefore do not arrange for or support any development activities that may benefit the entire

community. Heterogeneity also implies that members of different caste groups may not be willing to come together and participate in a common activity. As has been found in many instances that programs that do not receive adequate support from the local leaders or sections of the community generally do not take off the ground or eventually fade out.

The Adult Education Program

The National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched throughout the country in October 1978. In Gujarat however, it was implemented in January 1978.

The three major components of the program are: (1) Literacy (including numeracy), (2) Functionality and (3) Social awareness. Teaching-learning materials include books (readers, workbooks, notebooks and instructor's guide), charts, blackboard and slates for learners.

Classes are for a period of ten months, plus two months assigned for research and planning. Target group is illiterate adults who are in the 15-35 age group. The socially and economically weak sections of the society (SC, ST and OBC) and women are a priority among the target group.

The requirement for starting an Adult Education center (AEC) in a village is to have at least 30 learners per class. A village can have more than one AEC in order to cover the target groups living in different parts of the village. These centers could be separate for men and women or joint for both.

Classes are generally held at a time (usually at night) and place convenient to the learners. The instructor is usually selected from the village and is paid a remuneration of Rs. 50 per month. The supervisor who is in charge of

supervising 30 centers in the area visits the center once or twice a month. The project officer too pays occasional visits.

The village was assigned two AECs for the year (1984-85) by the District Adult Education Office which is responsible for the administration and implementation of the Adult Education Programme (AEP) at the District level. Both the centers in the village were for women participants. The project officer and the District Adult Education Officer (DAEO) informed me that while planning the AEP for the year a decision was made to have more women's AECs in keeping with the national policy emphasizing women's education. Out of the 100 AECs in 34 villages of Gandhinagar district sponsored by the State Adult Education Programme (SAEP) 69 were for women, five for men and 26 were mixed centers for both men and women. Number of learners in these centers consisted of 2436 females and 599 males.

In Dhanap the AEP had been implemented for the three previous terms (each term is of ten months duration) and the centers were for a mixed group or for men. The instructors too had been male during the three terms. During the current term both the centers were for women and each had a female instructor.

The instructor for one of the centers was a young unmarried Bania woman (high caste) and the other was a young married woman belonging to the artisan caste whose husband was an Adult Education instructor in the previous term. He wanted to continue with the job but the supervisor and the project officer suggested that his wife should take the job instead, as the program now emphasized more women's centers with women instructors.

Both the instructors lived in the central part of the village only a few houses away from each other. Classes met in their front yards. One of the

requirements of the AEP is to hold classes close to where the majority of the learners or potential learners reside. Potential learners are those who are illiterate and socially and economically backward. As these characteristics are typical of certain caste groups who generally live in clusters, it is easy to identify the target group and conduct the AEC in that sector.

In Dhanap the central part of the village was selected (partly due to the convenience of the instructors) where approximately one-third of the Thakores (majority of whom are illiterate) and most of the artisan castes live. The houses of some of the upper castes are also located in the same area.

In this case the Thakores and the artisan castes (both these are categorized as "other backward class") were the real target group, although some of the Patel women who lived close by were also included. Information from the available register of one AEC showed a total of 27 participants (instead of the required 30), consisting of 15 artisan caste women, five Thakores and seven Patels and high caste. The register of the other AEC was not available but from the information gathered from the instructors and other informants it seemed that Thakores formed at least 50 percent of the participants.

It was found that among the 27 registered participants, six were above 35 years of age. The other register was not available as the instructor had turned it in to the supervisor for checking and later had decided to terminate the class and therefore never brought it back.

The register also listed names of those who did not live in the village. They were only visiting their parents who lived in Dhanap. As it is customary for women to visit their parents for an extended period of time, especially during

the early years of marriage, some of the enrolled participants were away at their parents place in another village. This also made it difficult to contact the enrolled participants.

The process of enrolling involves the instructor going from house to house in the identified sector or area where the potential participants live. It usually takes some persuasion to convince people to join the class. Since a list of 30 participants is a must in order to offer an AEC, often the names of those not fully willing to participate are included. As some of the participants said, they never went to the class but had given their name because the instructor had come to their house (to oblige the instructor) and because many in the neighborhood had enrolled. Out of the 12 enrolled participants who were interviewed, eight said they joined the class because the instructor came to ask or because others in the neighborhood were enrolling. Only four said they enrolled due to their own interest, to become literate.

Classes, as I was told, met at 8:00 p.m. for about an hour or more every night except on occasions such as wedding or death in the village or days of religious significance and festivals. However it was later found that the classes had been unofficially terminated some time ago.

During the first few days of field work I was told that the classes were temporarily closed as it was not convenient to meet at one of the instructor's place as her sister-in-law was pregnant. The other instructor who lived with her in-laws in the village was away at her parents place in another village and according to her mother-in-law, was to return shortly. But I did not see her during the first couple of months of field work. She had only paid brief visits

and, even after her return, classes did not resume. Soon people started admitting that the classes had closed down after a few initial sessions over a couple of months.

Information gathered from various sources showed evidence that the two AECs did function initially. Just how long did the classes run, how frequently they met and when exactly did they close is difficult to say. Although an attendance register is to be maintained by each of the instructor giving information about daily attendance for each session, there was a lot of manipulation of figures. It was learned that this is a common practice in many of the AECs, and the findings of some of the evaluation studies confirm this observation.¹

Most of the participants who were interviewed said they had been to the class only once or twice (the first two classes) and therefore were not able to give much information about the content and activities. According to them, during those sessions they mainly sang devotional (religious) songs and were shown pictures on a chart. Those who had attended a few more sessions said they were taught to read and identify a few letters and words and to count up to 100.

A few participants had also learned to write their names. Very few women could recall the content related to social awareness and functionality and mentioned having seen pictures of some of the social evils such as alcoholism and child marriage. They, however, failed to see the relevance of these topics as part of the curriculum of adult education. Only literacy was perceived as being the major component of the AE program, although interest in this aspect, according to both the instructors, was very low. The Majority of the informants also had similar views about adult education and were not aware of the other

two aspects of the program. Some of the evaluation studies in the State have reported similar findings.

Regarding the functioning of the AECs, the participants enumerated several reasons for not attending and for their subsequent close down.

1. Those involved with agricultural work (the Thakores) said they had no time to attend the AECs, especially after a hard day's work.

2. Those enrolled for reasons other than their own interest thought that it was not important for them to attain literacy at this age.

3. Some blamed the instructors for not conducting the classes and said they used to attend regularly in the beginning, but one day, when they went to the instructor's place (the artisan caste woman) they were surprised to see that the doors were shut and there was no class; since then they decided not to go to her class.

4. Several participants complained about one of the instructors (the artisan caste woman), that she was often away from the village, (at her parents place) and did not run the classes regularly. A few participants also left her class and joined the other instructor's class. The latter seemed to have greater credibility and respect. Perhaps this was because she belonged to the higher caste (Bania), and was more educated than the other instructor.

5. Lack of any direct economic benefits was one of the major reasons for the low motivation in attending the AEC. Some participants recalled the previous years when there was a provision for giving kitchen utensils as incentives to attend the AEC. This year there was no such scheme to sustain learner motivation.

6. Some perceived the program as being beneficial only to the instructors, saying that, "what do we get from attending the classes? ...the instructor gets Rs. 50 and wants us to attend so that she can get her salary. Why should we waste our time?"

7. Many participants mentioned that they stopped going to the class as it was very inconvenient to sit outside in the cold during winter. Although the location of the center, being in their own neighborhood, was convenient for all the participants.

The problem of time seemed to be genuine for those who worked on the farm, but for the rest, it appeared to be an excuse for lack of interest and motivation. The problem of motivation seems to be critical, not only among the learners but also among the instructors and other functionaries.

Perceptions of other informants and leaders about the Adult Education Program Interviews with some of the potential participants not enrolled in AEC showed similar views about the program and about adult education in general. Some of the same reasons were given for not enrolling in AEC as given by the enrolled learners for not attending. A few of the potential learners said they had not enrolled because the instructor never came to ask them - perhaps because they were not in the village or lived on the farm for work during the days the instructor visited.

According to many informants, the center did not function as the participants were mostly busy with farm work and have little time for such activity. Some held the participants responsible for their lack of interest, whereas others blamed the instructor (one of them) for not running the classes regularly.

A few informants sympathized with the instructors and said they could not do anything when people are not interested in attending.

The leaders, especially men, showed little interest in the AECs or in women's adult education in general. Some of the leaders did not know whether the program was offered in the current year and referred to the previous year's AEC when asked about their opinion of the program. Some did not know who the instructors were or where the classes were held.

Generally adult education for women was seen more as a social service rather than a need for women. Most leaders had a patronizing attitude toward women's adult education and felt that it was a good activity for them, "they can learn something rather than sit and gossip".

In short, most of the informants failed to recognize the need for women's adult education or to connect it with development.

Perceptions of program functionaries about the Adult Education Program

Instructors: For both the instructors it was their first experience in adult education. Both were 20 years of age and had formal education up to S.S.C. (11th grade) and 7th grade respectively. The latter is the minimum required to qualify for an AE instructor. None of them had any training in adult education prior to the beginning of the term. They later participated in the in-service training offered at Gandhinagar about seven months after the commencement of the present AECs. The purpose of the training program was to prepare instructors for the following term. It was observed that out of the 10 day training program both the instructors had attended only five days.

During an interview with the instructors after the training it was found that one of them was not able to recall the three major components of the AEP,

although she had covered some of the literacy and social awareness topics in her class. Activities in her class mainly included singing and reading stories to the learners. There was a brief discussion on social awareness with the help of charts. She also attempted imparting literacy skills, but had found that learners were not interested in literacy.

The other instructor too had similar experiences but seemed to have emphasized the literacy aspect more in her class. She too had held discussion on social awareness topics and recalled a discussion on child marriage in which participants were interested. But she found it difficult to convince them, especially the Patels, among whom the practice is common. They could not appreciate the suggestion of a reform from a young woman. She also mentioned having discussed some of the topics related to the functionality aspect such as health, hygiene, information about dairy, etc., but in less detail compared to literacy.

None of the instructors made any attempt to coordinate the activities, of the center with the local agencies nor invited any of the local workers (school authorities, health worker, village development worker, dairy personnel, etc.) to provide information about various agencies and services which form part of the functional education aspect of the curriculum.

However, the reasons behind this have to be judged in the context of some of the factors mentioned earlier, namely, the apathy of the leaders, lack of motivation on the part of instructors and learners, insufficient training of instructors, and the fact that the program did not function beyond a few months.

Both the instructors seemed to have taken the job of adult education more due to the suggestion and persuasion of the supervisor and the project officer

than due to their own interest. One of the instructors, who had decided not to continue the job in the next term, openly expressed her dissatisfaction with the work. She mentioned of her interest in teaching, and enjoyed the work initially, but lost interest when learners were too irregular and she had to go house to house to convince them to attend the class everyday. She said she would rather tutor school children (as she had been doing earlier) than conduct adult education class. The other instructor was more cautious about expressing her feelings since she wanted to continue with the class later. Although she too had closed the center and felt that the job of adult education instruction was a difficult one, she nevertheless wanted to continue the job in the next term. The reason apparently was the small income that could be earned without having to conduct the classes, as was done in the present term.

The two instructors had somewhat different views about adult education for women. One of them believed that adult education is more important and useful for men than women as the former has to keep the financial records in the family. The other instructor believed that adult education is essential for women as they are illiterate and have had less formal education compared to men. It will enable them to keep the accounts from selling milk and will no longer need help from others.

The instructors listed several problems faced by them that provide understanding about the problem of motivation and the non-functioning of the centers.

1. Irregularity in the attendance of learners was cited as one of the major problems by the instructors. According to them it was mainly due to lack of time and interest on the part of learners.
2. One of the instructors complained about the amount of remuneration paid (Rs. 50 per month) and felt it was too little for the amount of work expected. Similar findings have been reported by studies conducted on AEP at the State and national level.
3. The task was felt to be too demanding. There were too many hassles involved--convincing learners to enroll, organizing them, persuading them to attend regularly, maintaining regular record of attendance, calculating average monthly attendance figures, etc.
4. Teaching-learning materials were received two months after the classes started. It was difficult to introduce the subject and sustain the interest of learners without the use of materials.

Regarding the functioning of the centers on paper, there seemed to be an understanding between the instructors and the supervisor and with all the officials up the line who had at least some knowledge of the reality.

Supervisor, Project Officer and the District Adult Education Officer:

During the initial meetings with the supervisor and the project officer, before starting the field work, they tried to give an impression that the AECs in the District were functioning very well and that a majority of the learners were attending the centers regularly. They arranged for my visit and accompanied me to one of the AECs in a village close to the sample village. The class was well conducted and the center seemed to be running regularly. The instructor

appeared to be very enthusiastic and interested in her work and so did the participants. The participants demonstrated their literacy skills which they had acquired during the four months of attending the AEC. Such centers, as I learned later, were very rare and were conducted only occasionally. In many other villages, I was told that the centers are conducted only when there are visitors to observe the AEC. My own observation in another village, which is 10 km. from the sample village, and where the adult education class was arranged that night specially for my visit, confirmed this information. The setting up of such a show to create an impression of an ideal center for visitors was found to be a common phenomena in many villages, as was later learned from interviews with several informants and from some of the evaluation reports. When the supervisor and the project officer were interviewed later during the course of my field work, they admitted that only 30-60% of the the centers were functioning regularly. According to them women's centers were better than men's in terms of regularity and interest of participants. Similar observations are made by another evaluation study in the State.

The supervisor and the project officer enumerated several reasons for the irregularity and non-functioning of the centers:

1. Irregularity of learners due to agricultural and household work.
2. Learner's lack of interest - especially the 25-35 year olds think its too late for them to learn.
3. Insufficient remuneration paid to the instructors - hence they are not motivated to conduct the classes regularly.

4. No scheme for motivating the learners or to create interest for adult education in them. There is no provision for rewards, entertainment, excursion or refreshments to attract the learners to the AECs. The program has provision for a film and a folk drama related to literacy, which can be arranged in any village having an AEC but these are rarely organized as the quality of the film is very poor and the folk drama can only be arranged in a few villages each year due to limitations of budget.

Regarding their work both the supervisor and the project officer seemed to have made sincere efforts at fulfilling their duties. They were, however, dissatisfied due to the numerous problems they faced in doing so. These are summarized below:

- 1) Both had accepted their present jobs in adult education because they were unable to get one in the secondary school.
- 2) Both were dissatisfied with their job because the positions were temporary - there was no job security, no rewards or recognition or certificates offered, no benefits such as promotions and increments as offered in other services. According to them, no one with their qualification (a B.Ed degree) would accept this job if given a choice.
- 3) Inadequate facilities and allowances for the supervisor to carry out his duties of visiting the AECs in 14 different villages. Very little allowance given for travel, difficulty in travelling at night to villages that do not have electricity and/or night bus service.
- 4) Difficulty in convincing the instructors to take up the job - with such low remuneration they are not willing to accept the job.

5) Pressure from the officials above to continue certain number of AECs in order to maintain a fair record and achieve the target, even if they are not functioning well. In order to continue a center, a minimum attendance of 12-15 has to be shown.

6) In spite of presenting these problems in the meetings very little is done to solve them, no changes are made and things go on as decided from above.

7) Lack of coordination between various agencies - local and district level - and between the different levels of AEP staff makes it difficult to accomplish the program goals - especially the 'functionality' aspect which requires support from various agencies.

8) Politics often interferes with the selection of instructors - for instance the Sarpanch would want them to select the person recommended by him or else he will not support the program. Lack of support from the village panchayat is often the cause of close down of AECs.

Both the supervisor and the Project officer were in favor of the AEP and its goals and believed that the socio-economically weaker sections of the society would certainly benefit if the program functioned according to the plan.

Similar views about the program were expressed by the District Adult Education Officer (DAEO). The DAEO is in charge of the AEP in the district and decisions are made by a committee formed by district level administrators. Generally one of the education officers in the State is assigned the post of DAEO. This transfer is looked upon as a demotion - a punishment - as the DAEO has less administrative power than the District Education Officer. Thus the position is regarded as having lower status. The DAEO was extremely critical of the administrative structure of the AEP and resented his appointment as a DAEO.

Expressing his frustration and dissatisfaction with the position he explained that there is a dual system of administration in which the DAEO has the responsibility but the District Education Office has the power to make decisions. Such a situation causes unnecessary delay in the procedures which in turn has serious effects on the functioning of the program.

The AEP according to him receives a step child like treatment compared to other projects of the district panchayat. For instance, when a scheme of rewarding adult education functionaries was suggested, it was not approved at the district panchayat meeting.

His assessment of the AEP in the district was similar to those of the supervisor and the project officer and he admitted that the program had achieved only 50% success in terms of attendance of participants and only 25% in terms of attainment of literacy.

Again the failure was partly attributed to the disinterest of the learners. According to him, interest has to be created among the participants. This places tremendous burden on the instructors who are not willing to do the work for a meagre salary and they have their own limitations - they are not highly educated and lack knowledge and experience of teaching adults.

The DAEO was aware of the reality of non-functioning of the centers but was himself helpless and admitted his disinterest in the work - not in the nature of work but due to the frustration resulting from lack of power and status.

Interviews with all the functionaries of the AEP suggested that (1) the program has a deliberate emphasis on the literacy aspect, (2) there was a definite problem of motivation both with the participants and the instructors mainly due

to lack of rewards, (3) rigidities in administration and policies, and pressure to achieve a target breeds frustration among all functionaries.

All the functionaries were in favour of the objectives of AEP and believed that the target group--weaker sections of the society and women--would definitely benefit if the program functioned according to the plan. In spite of the problems and obstacles they felt that there is a strong need for adult education for women.

It should be noted that the program has a continuous monitoring and evaluation system based on which monthly, quarterly and annual reports are prepared. But these are based on information available from attendance registers and other forms which are routinely filled out and often have inflated figures to project a satisfactory picture of the situation. The task of evaluating the whole program is assigned to external agencies, such as Universities and research institutions who carry out independent evaluations. Their results provide a fairly similar picture to the one observed in this study.

The Home Science Training Program

A three day Home Science (Home Economics) training for women was organized in the village by the Farm Science center (an agriculture training and extension agency) located in one of the larger villages in Gandhinagar district. Training for women forms an important aspect of the various types of programs offered by the Farm Science Center to cater to the needs of the rural community and different categories therein - small and marginal farmers, farm women, school dropouts, etc.

The center provides training in agriculture and related topics such as horticulture, crop production, animal science and home science. Besides these, courses in cottage industries for income generation (making soap, detergent, mats, etc.) are also offered. Adult education classes too are conducted in selected villages. The Home Science training is specially designed for women and includes topics such as food preservation, importance of nutritious diet and preparation of low cost nutritious food, animal husbandry, child care, some income generating skills like soap making, etc. Although the content of the training may be limited to only one or few of these topics depending on the needs and interest of the target group and the duration and location of the training.

Both institutional and village level training is offered and the duration varies from a one day camp in the village to a 3-6 day training or demonstration either in the village or at the center. The programs are flexible in terms of the content, approach and duration and are designed to meet the needs of specific target groups.

Generally the center conducts intensive work only in the ten villages which are selected on the basis of their backwardness and their proximity to the center. Occasionally though, training is conducted in other villages if there is a request and/or a need. Dhanap was selected for a three day training in Home Science for women partly due to my contact with the staff of the Farm Science Center who were aware of my work in the village. However, as this was not their sample village, all of the procedures which are normally followed by their staff (survey, follow-up) were not conducted.

The approach used by one of the instructors was to visit the village and contact a few leaders a couple of weeks before scheduling the training in order to explore the facilities and support that can be received and to identify and meet some of the potential participants. As mentioned earlier, the Sarpanch showed little interest and did not offer any direct support. Later, a visit with one of the Adult Education instructor and her mother-in-law who was a resourceful person in her neighborhood, and with some other women in the area, helped identify the potential participants. A few more women in the neighborhood and some key individuals in other communities (Darbars, Patels) were contacted and the purpose of the Home science training program as well as the content of the course were explained to them. The dates and place of the meeting were then finalized and they were asked to inform other women in their neighborhood to attend the training. After exploring a few alternatives the instructor selected the front yard of the Adult Education instructor's place (where the AEC used to meet) to conduct the training as it was felt that members of different communities - especially the Thakores and the artisan caste - who lived in that area will be able to attend. None from the SC community were contacted as the instructor felt that they would not participate in an activity where members of the high and intermediate castes are present. She told me that a separate session has to be arranged for them in their area or ward.

The content of the training was limited to demonstration of preparing nutritious food, explaining their nutritional value and providing some information about the importance of nutritious diet. Two female staff members (one junior and one senior) of the Farm Science center conducted the training. It was observed that on the scheduled place and time (1 PM) on the first day of

training 35-40 women turned up. A majority of them were in the 18-35 age group. During the three days a total of 52 women attended the training; only 25 of whom were present on all the three days. The rest attended only for a day or two mainly due to farm work or because of young children at home. Some of those who were not present on the first day said they were not informed about the program.

Caste wise composition of the participants showed an equal proportion of Patels, Darbars and the artisan castes. Although there were many houses of the Thakore community in the area, very few (only three) attended the sessions for only a day or two. Some of the reasons for this found later were: (a) lack of time due to farm work, (b) some of them were not informed, (c) some came for a day but felt uncomfortable in the presence of a majority of high caste members, and (d) certain communities do not find such topics useful and were therefore not interested in attending.

Each day the sessions started with a brief introduction by one of the instructors about the recipe for the day and its nutritional value followed by a demonstration. Most of the participants seemed enthusiastic about learning the new recipe. However, the younger girls, 14-17 year olds, who were sitting behind seemed less interested and paid no attention to the instructors talk, often talking among themselves and distracting other participants. Women who were in the 20-35 year age group appeared to be most eager to learn, as they occupied places closer to the demonstration area and occasionally asked questions. It was observed that soon after the demonstration was over, most of the participants tasted the cooked dish and dispersed immediately, leaving no opportunity for the instructors to continue the session to give further information. The goal of

the program, as perceived by the participants, was limited to the demonstration of the recipe.

Regarding the training sessions, most women felt that they had learned something new--a new recipe--and were appreciative of the instructors' efforts. In general however most participants did not consider the training very useful as they already knew how to cook--though not the recipes demonstrated. Such training, according to some women, would be good for teenage girls. Some of the women interviewed later said they had expected something more or different than just cooking demonstration. Apparently there was some misunderstanding which resulted from the instructor's first visit during which she had explained the entire training program, giving examples of the some of the topics under food preservation and income generation, to a few women who were later asked to inform others about the training. Hence they came to the sessions with an expectation to learn about preservation of fruits and vegetables, soap making, etc. and were somewhat disappointed with the training.

During the training the instructors had informed the participants that if they were interested in other topics, a training could be arranged at the center for a few days where accommodation for living is available or if they wish to commute, a travel allowance can be offered. They were asked to decide among themselves and inform the center at a later date. A few women did seem to be interested but in the absence of support from most others, who were not willing to go outside their village for training, the plans did not materialize. As most of the women are responsible for tending animals, caring for the children and for doing the household chores, they found it difficult to be away from home for the entire day.

An interview with the two instructors provided the following information about the program and about some of the difficulties faced in implementing the training programs for women:

1. Women are not able to participate fully due to farm work and responsibility for tending animals. This is more so for institutional training which are of 3-7 days duration. Women who work in the fields are not willing to lose wages for those days. Those who do not work for wages have to take care of animals and neglecting it would mean loss of income. Certain subjects (certain skill training for instance) can be better explained with the help of demonstration for which the materials and equipment are available at the center and it is difficult to arrange for it in the village.
2. Even village level training has to be limited to three days of 2-3 hours each day so that it is convenient for farm women to attend.
3. Women from different class have different interests in terms of the subject matter. Those from the upper classes are interested in food preservation, cooking, handicrafts, sewing, etc.; whereas the backward classes such as Thakores and SC, find agriculture and animal husbandry courses more useful. However, the instructors are asked by their supervisors to include all categories of women, especially the backward classes, in all types of training. The instructors find this difficult to accomplish.
4. Both literate and illiterate women participate but the former are generally aware of the benefits from such training. Among the illiterate women, awareness about the need for and benefits from the training has to be created. They also have difficulty in comprehending certain unfamiliar

topics within a short time. It requires frequent contact with them in order to motivate them and make them comprehend. However, the instructors often find it difficult to accomplish due to limitations of time and facility.

5. The instructors felt that the use of audio-visual media like slides or film would not only help to create interest but also facilitate comprehension of certain subjects which are difficult to explain through lectures, especially to illiterate groups. The instructors felt a strong need for such media which is available for agriculture but not for other subjects.

Both the instructors liked their work, and felt that women would certainly benefit from adopting the new practices introduced in the training. However, the instructors felt that the program would be more successful in terms of outreach if they were allowed more flexibility and freedom to make decisions regarding implementation of the program at the village level.

Endnotes

1. For evaluation studies on the Adult Education Program in Gujarat see (1) A. Sharma, V. P. Shah, & B. K. Parikh, 1979, Adult Education Programme in Gujarat: An Appraisal, Ahmedabad: Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research; (2) L. Visaria, & H. T. Patel, 1984, Adult Education Programme in Gujarat: An Indepth Study, Ahmedabad: Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research; (3) K. R. Shah, 1983, Adult Education in Gujarat: An Evaluation Study. Indian Journal of Adult Education, 44 (11), 22-27.

NONFORMAL EDUCATION NEEDS

In addition to the observations of the ongoing programs and the physical, social and cultural environment reflecting the educational needs of women (presented in previous chapters), direct questions were asked about nonformal education needs of women. This chapter presents the perspectives of three different groups: (a) needs perceived by women in the village who were potential participants of nonformal education programs; (b) needs perceived by informants in the village--leaders, teachers, etc. (c) needs perceived by program functionaries such as program staff and administrators.

Different methods were used to gather information from the three groups. Observations and unstructured interviews--both individual and group--were used with the first two groups. Semi-structured individual interviews were the primary method of collecting information from the program staff.

Since participation or the willingness to participate is closely related to and is indicative of their felt needs, the problems and issues related to participation are also examined.

Needs Perceived by Women

Interviews with women from the target group (potential participants) were conducted using the case study approach. In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 women from different caste quarters representing different social class and occupations. In addition, discussions with 11 groups, each

consisting of 3-6 women were held with women living in different areas representing different caste groups.

The focus of the inquiry was on the felt needs of women that can be addressed by nonformal education programs. The questions addressed were directed at particular subject areas, time and location preferred for attending the programs, preferred instructors and the desirable target group for such programs. Also explored were the factors affecting learning and participation in the programs. Some of these questions were discussed in the previous chapter under Nonformal Education programs implemented in the village. Here the views of respondents on NFE programs not offered in the village are also included.

The following questions served as a guideline for conducting the individual and group interviews with women:

1. What kind of skills would you be interested in learning?
2. If the following programs were offered in your village would you be interested in participating? (literacy, agriculture, etc.)
3. Why would you like to participate/why not?
4. When and where should they be offered?
5. Who would you like to be the instructor for such programs?
6. For whom are such programs necessary? (age group, class, etc.)

The needs expressed by women for nonformal education varied according to their age, level of education, class, caste and occupation. These differences are mentioned only if found and are applicable. Responses were also determined by ones position in the family (daughter, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law),

familiarity with the subject and prior exposure to such programs. The complexity of responses is increased further by the respondents' views on need for nonformal education programs for individuals and groups not akin to them (age, class, caste). Further questions explored the individual's willingness for and barriers to participation in the programs.

It was found that the respondents were often not aware of their needs or could not conceive of an organized learning activity to acquire certain skills. When respondents were asked about their interest in learning a particular skill, for instance, a common response was: "we don't know of any such thing offered in our village." According to Hamilton-Smith (1975), people want things they are accustomed to or perceive as possible in their situation. Leagans (1964) has also reported that adults are often not aware of their most important needs. In addition, rural women perceived child care, dairy work and, to a large extent, agricultural work as skills that are informally acquired within the family by observing other family members, and not through formal learning.

Subjects Preferred

Specific questions were asked about women's learning needs in the areas of: (1) literacy (2) income generating skills (e.g., making soap/detergent, mats, candles, etc) (3) agriculture and animal husbandry (4) food preparation and preservation (5) health, family planning and child care (6) sewing and (7) general information (e.g., application procedure for loan for housing, purchasing livestock, etc.).

These subject areas were selected on the basis of the researcher's own observation of their daily chores and activities, and on what was available in terms of programs in these areas.

The respondents' choice of subject for nonformal education programs varied according to their age, class/ caste, occupation and level of education. Overall, the subject chosen by the majority of the respondents was "Income Generating Skills", whereas Health, Child Care, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry were chosen by least number of respondents.

The need for literacy skills was expressed by more than half of the respondents. Among the younger women (15-30 years), more showed their readiness to attend literacy classes than the older women (30+ years). The younger women were mostly school dropouts and regretted not staying in school long enough to learn the basic skills.

Caste and class differences were also reflected in the felt needs for literacy. Among young women, more from the lower and middle class preferred literacy classes than those belonging to the upper classes and castes. The reason given by the lower class respondents and (mainly farm laborers) was that they might be able to find other work when farm work was not available or it might help in relieving them from the pressure of farm labor in the future. Respondents from the middle class hoped that they will be in a better position to educate their children if they themselves were literate. Their ability to read would make them more independent and confident when traveling outside the village. Although, those who felt the need for literacy were not sure whether they would be able to attend literacy classes because of lack of time. This was especially true with farm workers. On the other hand, women who did not work outside their homes

(housewives) did express an interest in attending literacy classes. Those who did not know about the adult education class offered in the village asked for it, whereas those who knew about it and had dropped out of adult education class did not show interest in attending in the future.

The only nonformal education program that the majority of the respondents showed an equal interest was income generating skills such as learning to make soap, detergents, incense sticks, candles, mats, etc. This was preferred by respondents across all subgroups (age, level of education, class and occupation). The immediate economic gain perceived by the respondents made this activity most appealing and acceptable. Secondly, the respondents also reported the novelty aspect of "learning something new." The productive nature of the activity, "making something", and the utility value, "making something we can use", attracted the respondents. Another factor that may have influenced the responses was the awareness about such programs. Some of the respondents had heard about such programs offered in other villages. Also the Home Science instructors, during their three day program on "preparation of nutritious food", had informed the participants about such programs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the participants of this program had expected that one of the income generating skills would be demonstrated during the three day program, and were disappointed when only 'food preparation' was demonstrated. They almost demanded that such programs be offered in their village.

Very few respondents felt the need for programs that improve their skills in agriculture and animal husbandry, and that would help them increase their economic benefits. The few who showed interest in such programs were all

illiterate women. Most women did not see the need for learning such skills by enrolling in an educational program. They believed that such skills were learned informally by observing others and following the traditional methods in agriculture and animal husbandry. It is possible that the lack of exposure to and awareness about such programs, and the lack of clarity regarding the content of such programs was responsible for the lack of interest expressed in these subjects.

The need for programs in sewing, food preparation and preservation was expressed by less than half of the respondents. In fact they did not consider food preparation important, but were interested in learning ways to preserve food. The majority among those with this view were younger women belonging to the upper and middle class. Many respondents felt that it requires literacy skills and special aptitude to learn sewing. As a result, most illiterate women did not feel confident of learning it themselves but suggested that they would like their daughters to learn. Women from the poor and labor class showed no interest in learning sewing. Besides perceiving it as an activity that requires literacy skills, they were not sure whether they would ever be able to use it as they would be in no position to purchase a sewing machine.

The need for learning child care and health related skills was not recognized by the majority of the respondents. Child care was one of the activities considered to be learned informally within the family and therefore, according to them, did not require formal or nonformal instruction. Although these subjects were considered important, only a few thought it useful to learn health care and first aid skills.

Respondents were asked about their need for general information on health and credit facilities, application procedures for loans for housing and

purchase of livestock, scholarships for school going children, etc. Women who were illiterate and belonged to the middle and low income groups were interested in gaining such information. Caste differences were significant since none of the women from the higher castes expressed the need for such information. There may be the prestige factor influencing the response as those among the high caste usually do not consider it respectable to ask for something (loan), and because usually the men take care of such matters. It was observed that most women were poorly informed about schemes and programs available for their benefit. The lower and middle class women were aware of the scholarships for school children and loans for purchasing animals, but they lacked information about applying for it directly. They depended on the village leader who would inform them and file an application on their behalf since most of the women could not read or write. Thus the dependency of the poor and the powerless on the powerful was reinforced not only because of their lack of literacy skills but also because of the lack of access to information.

Time and Location Preferred

An important factor influencing the the respondents' interest in nonformal education programs was the time and location the programs were offered. Respondents who expressed their interest in learning certain skills said that their participation in those programs would depend on when and where the classes were held. They were particularly concerned about the location, and reported that they would participate in most of the programs (any subject) if the class was held near their residence, especially in their own caste sector or ward.

It should be noted that caste was the major factor determining their choice of location and hence their interest and willingness to participate in programs. Most of them would hesitate to go to the area that clearly belonged to another caste group. For instance, a Darbar woman is not likely to attend a program offered in the Thakore community and never in a Harijan community (an untouchable caste), even if she was interested in the subject. Similarly, Harijan women, aware of their own status, would not enter the residential area of higher castes to attend any program. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, rules regarding interaction between castes are more flexible among the intermediate castes (Thakores and artisan castes) and some higher castes (Patels), who often visit each others area.

In terms of preference for location then, their first choice was "in our own area" and second choice was a neutral place such as the school building. A few respondents were willing to attend a program held in any location as long as it was within the village. None of the respondents showed willingness to participate in programs outside their village.

Time of day was another factor influencing their willingness to participate in programs. Approximately one-half of the respondents preferred afternoon (two hours) to attend such activities, especially those who were not engaged in agricultural or other work outside their home. The farm workers who preferred afternoon said they would be able to participate only during the two months of summer when they are not busy with farm work. Few respondents (mostly agricultural laborers) preferred night and for the rest either night or afternoon was convenient. Most of these were the Patels and the intermediate castes who did not work outside their home and also the part-time agricultural laborers who

had less social restrictions regarding going out at night. The Darbar women, however, refused to participate in programs held at night unless there were other women from their neighborhood and caste who would accompany them.

In general, almost all respondents were willing to attend nonformal education programs for a short period, preferably for two-three months during summer. Very few among those who had shown an interest in learning sewing and those not engaged in farm work were willing to participate for a longer period (up to six months) but would prefer not to have the classes everyday.

Respondents also indicated that their participation would, to a certain extent, depend upon who was conducting the classes. Almost all the respondents preferred a female instructor. A little over half of the respondents said it did not matter if the instructor was from within or outside the village as long as she had the qualifications to teach the skills. However, approximately one-third expressed their preference for an instructor from outside (not from their village). They usually perceived someone from outside (from a large town) to be more qualified and better trained in the skills to be taught. Only one respondent--an illiterate women from the Thakore community who is an agricultural laborer, thought it would be better to have a local person as an instructor as "she would be able to speak and understand the local dialect."

Methods Preferred

No specific inquiry was made with regard to methods preferred for different types of programs, activities or skills. Respondents were asked in general about their interest in attending a lecture, demonstration, film and folk drama as these media are sometimes used by agencies implementing nonformal

education programs. A majority of the respondents expressed their interest in folk drama which is a very popular form of entertainment in the rural areas. With the exception of a few Thakore women most said they would go to see a folk drama if shown in their village. Film was popular only among young women (below 25 years). Both lecture and demonstration methods were seen more or less as formal instruction and were accepted as methods widely used in many nonformal and formal education programs. Demonstration was preferred over lecture by most of the respondents who felt the latter would be difficult to follow since they did not have the literacy skills nor any formal schooling. This response was more common among the illiterate and the older women.

Further questions concerning the appropriate target group for such programs were asked in order to explore their views of and need for nonformal education. The rationale for this question was that respondents often hesitated to express their need as they felt they were too old and/or too busy to participate, but felt it was important for certain groups (the younger, the poor, those belonging to a certain class) to learn certain skills. Approximately half of the respondents felt that nonformal education is good for both male and female, whereas the other half thought it is especially good for females and the illiterate as they have little access to formal education and to learn skills outside their home and village. They believed nonformal education is especially important for young girls because if the latter learned something at a young age, they will be able to make use of the skills later in life. A few respondents also mentioned that nonformal education is especially relevant for poor women. Respondents from the poor and backward classes felt that nonformal education will be very useful for the poor but at the same time said that it would be impossible for them

to participate unless the classes are held in their area as they would not go to residential areas of other castes. In short, about half of the respondents felt that nonformal education is appropriate for women, especially young women, illiterate, and the poor. The responses of the other half of the respondents was divided, some thought nonformal education is good for all categories of people and some did not express their opinion on this issue.

As mentioned earlier, both awareness of their own needs, and the knowledge about certain programs, influenced the needs expressed by women for nonformal education. Respondents differed in both these aspects and in their ability to articulate their views and opinions making it difficult to come to conclusion regarding needs of particular group of respondents.

A summary of the activities and roles, the size of land holding, and the needs expressed by women from different caste groups is given in Table 6.

Needs Perceived by Local Leaders

Another group of individuals interviewed on women's nonformal education needs were the local leaders, both men and women. They included the village headman, school principal, school teachers, village council members, and informal leaders such as the women who organized the women's religious group and other activities.

The informants were of the opinion that there was a definite interest in nonformal education programs that imparts training in skills that can be useful (food preservation, sewing, handicrafts, etc) and can generate some income.

Table 6. Women's economic activities, size of land holding, and nonformal education needs by caste

Caste	Land Holding ^a	Agricultural activity ^b				Subject area					
		AH	Non-farm	Farm	Non-Ag ^c	Literacy	IGS ^d	Ag/Dairy	Food Preserve	Sewing	Health/CC ^e
Upper											
Brahmin	S				X		X		X		
Bania	S				X		X		X		
Darbar	L	X	X				X		X	X	
Patel	L	X	X				X	X	X		
Intermediate											
Artisans	S/M	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	
Thakore	M/LL	X	X	X	X		X				
Lower											
Harijan	M/LL	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Vaghri	LL	X	X	X	X		X				
Raval/ Chamar	LL	X	X	X	X	X	X				

Note: Based on group and individual interviews with women ("X" indicates subject preferred by majority of respondents)

^aSize of land holding: L = large; S = small; M = marginal; LL = landless laborer

^bAH = animal husbandry; non-farm = agricultural activities carried out around the home; farm = on farm agricultural activities

^cEconomic activity other than agriculture

^dIGS = Income generating skills

^eCC = Child care

Literacy was seen as important, but they were doubtful whether most women would be interested in it. According to one of the women leaders, if they can get support they will be able to organize a program in which most women will be willing to attend. She reported that "they (male leaders) will not give any support to organize activities for women and therefore women will never be free; the village will develop but women's development will never take place because 'they' would not like things to change. They like things to go on as they are now." The women leaders also suggested that programs should be of short duration and at a time convenient to most women.

The male leaders did not perceive a strong need for nonformal education for women. Nor did they show much interest in such programs. When asked about their opinion on the type of programs needed for women in their village, they reported more on the development programs for the village in general than on any programs specially for women. The apathy of some of the village leaders, especially the village headman, has been observed and reported earlier in chapter 4.

Needs Perceived by Program Staff and Administrators

The staff of the two nonformal education programs viz., the Adult Education Program and the Home Science Training Program (by Farm Training Center), were asked about the need for NFE programs for rural women. Questions focused on the needs of women with specific reference to nonformal education.

All the staff members emphasized the need for nonformal education for rural women. According to them, women do have the need to learn certain skills; but they are not aware of it and the task of the program is to make them aware with the use of proper approach and adequate planning.

According to the chief instructor of the Farm Science Center, "the educated rural women know what is good for them; but the illiterate women need to be made aware of the need to learn the skills that would be of benefit to them." All of them agreed that the need is greater for the illiterate women, the poor and the socio-economically oppressed section of the society. As reported by the Project Officer of the Adult Education Program, "it is the women who run the household and take care of children. Therefore it will make a difference if they are informed. Until and unless their awareness is created, little change can be expected."

Their responses also confirmed the findings with rural women (mentioned in the earlier section in this chapter) that different sections (caste/class/occupation) have different needs and interests; therefore, nonformal education programs should be planned separately for these groups. For instance, the District Adult Education Officer (DAEO) reported that the Rabari women were involved in the production and processing of milk, and hence would not be interested in sewing and embroidery classes, but would find dairy training more relevant. The Home Science instructor also said that certain programs interested certain caste groups. For instance, the Patel and Brahmin women (higher castes) are less interested in dairy training but more interested in handicraft and cooking classes. Women who are agricultural laborers are usually not interested in the latter programs. Program staff recommended a

variety of topics such as training in dairy work, household industry, sewing, and other functional skills to meet the needs of different categories of rural women. According to the DAEO there is a need for imparting literacy skills, but rural women are least interested in this topic and most interested in learning skills that generate income. "Once they see the direct economic benefit, they will line up to participate", reported the DAEO. He suggested that literacy programs should be linked with training in skills that generate income. He also recommended an approach that appeals to the rural population and arouses their interest in participating, such as informal group discussions and activities, singing, problem solving, and more humanistic and flexible approach. "Once interest and awareness is created through such an approach, then literacy can be introduced."

The Project Officer was of the opinion that programs should not be restricted to certain age groups, such as the Adult Education Program, but should be extended to include other age groups and the educated if they volunteer to participate. Even the educated people need training in functional skills and need to be made aware of social evils (which is part of the curriculum for the current Adult Education Program).

The views of the program staff concurs with the findings from interviews and discussions with the respondents and key informants in the village, except for the programs on agriculture and animal husbandry. Contrary to the views of the officers and staff, the respondents did not see the need for such programs. Although in my observation in two other villages in which a training program in animal husbandry was conducted, a large group of women did participate. It is

possible then that women in this village were not able to perceive the need for such program because they were not exposed to it.

The information gathered and reported in this section is in agreement with the observations reported in previous chapter and can be summarized as follows.

1. Women in this village are not a homogeneous group. Their needs for nonformal education differed according to the categories to which they belong--their age, level of education, class, caste and occupation. Similarly Cross and Zusman (1977) conclude, from a study on needs of non-traditional learners conducted in the U.S., that the backgrounds, needs and aspirations of women are so diverse that there is no homogeneous needs profile that pertains to women or even more restrictively defined demographic groups.
2. Women who were directly involved in agricultural work expressed interest in agricultural training programs, although they were not willing to participate if it required missing a day's work and wage.
3. The most commonly held interest by the majority of women was learning ways to increase their income. Especially those who were not involved in agricultural work expressed interest in programs that would generate income. Women from upper and middle class backgrounds were more interested in sewing and cooking classes (especially the younger women).
4. Health and nutrition programs were preferred by very few women. Such programs are meaningful only if they are of direct use to their families.
5. Those who expressed interest in literacy programs were usually younger (below 30 years) and were school dropouts. Agricultural laborers were not

willing to participate due to heavy work load, and women from higher castes did not feel the need to learn such skills. In general, felt need for literacy was found to be low.

Adults, according to Cross and Zusman (1977), have a pragmatic orientation to education. They want to use education to improve their lives and they are quite conservative in their educational tastes. Education for adults therefore must have high credibility.

It seemed that women's access to and utilization of nonformal education programs was limited. Their access to information was also limited. Most information received by women was from indirect sources and usually through male members in the household. Often the information was filtered or did not trickle down. Hale (1977) has found similar problems of information flow concerning rural women. Many programs and facilities offered to women (e.g. credit facilities, loans for self-employment, adult education centers, skill training and employment opportunities) were unknown to them. Some had heard about them but did not have adequate information about the procedure in order to take action. There was a definite need for information--for a strategy to inform women--to make them aware of the ways to improve their knowledge, skills and living conditions. In the absence of such information, they will not be able to utilize the services and programs designed specifically for them.

Factors Determining Nonformal Education Needs and Participation

Several factors determined women's needs and their willingness to participate in nonformal education programs. For instance, at least half of the

women interviewed said they would participate in programs such as literacy, food preservation, and income generating programs if some of the conditions are met. The following suggestions were offered.

- a. The program/class should be offered near their residence.
- b. The time preferred was night or afternoons during summer when they are not busy with agricultural work.
- c. A 3-6 month duration was preferred to a year round program, with agricultural workers preferring the three months during summer.
- d. The majority of women preferred a female instructor and one who is from outside (large town) and not from their village.
- e. Few women suggested that some incentive should be offered to attend the classes.
- f. Many women showed their willingness to attend programs if others in the neighborhood were also attending. Both peer pressure and social approval were important motivating factors for most women.

Structural and attitudinal constraints were reflected in their willingness to participate in nonformal education programs. These constraints along with internalization of their subordinate role and their limited capability and freedom--all had a strong influence on their perception of need for nonformal education programs.

One of the widely reported obstacles to participation was "lack of time"--especially by the labor class who worked in the field. Even those from the middle class reported not having time due to household responsibilities, child care and agricultural related tasks. Those from the upper and middle classes had

comparatively more leisure time to participate in programs. However, women belonging to certain higher castes (such as the Darbar) were not willing to participate due to social restrictions that gave them little freedom to participate in activities outside their home.

Age was another obstacle perceived by women who were 35 years and above. There was the feeling of being too old to learn anything. Similar findings are reported in studies in the field of Adult Education by Cross (1974, 1982).

Another barrier to learning perceived by illiterate women was their illiterate status. Many among them reported "how can we learn anything, we are illiterate." There seemed to be a belief that only those with formal education were capable of learning new skills.

A common feeling among lower class and caste women was that education (including nonformal education) was not meant for them and that it was the privilege of the upper class to participate in educational activities. As mentioned in the chapter on Educational Status, the entire community from this caste/class had internalized this feeling.

Their perception of education or learning activity also determined their need for nonformal education. In general any learning activity is associated with schooling, and schooling is meant to increase one's capability to find employment other than in agriculture. Looking at nonformal education from this perspective then, the need for education, both formal and nonformal for girls, was not felt. This feeling was even stronger among the lower classes, mainly agricultural laborers, who did not see their role beyond household duties and agricultural work.

Their felt needs often reflected not only their structural constraints but also their own internalized subordinate role. The cultural training received by girls and the attitude of men also contributed toward shaping the felt needs of women. As many women reported, "what use will it be to us, after all we have to cook, clean, tend children and animals and work in the field." The views expressed by men in the village also seemed to perpetuate women's secondary status.

Fatalistic attitude was another obstacle that affects women's willingness to participate in nonformal education programs. They perceived little hope for things to change for their benefit, and therefore did not see the need to try to improve their skills. Leagans (1964) reports that "people have to see the gap between the actual, the possible, and the desirable, and place value on attaining the desirable before they become motivated to change." He further mentions that "... people tend to passively resist change [and they] ... tend to feel comfortable within their established ways, even when new ones are demonstrate." Thus no need is recognized.

Their needs were also determined by exposure to or familiarity with the existing nonformal education programs. There is considerable evidence that people want those things they are accustomed to or they perceive as possible in their situation (Hamilton-Smith, 1975). The fact that some of these feelings were stronger among women from lower socio-economic groups suggests the social alienation experienced by them.

Access to programs is an important factor determining need and participation. Cross and Zusman (1977) suggest that although there are other factors that affect rate of participation and interest of people, "access is a

fundamental requirement that would appear to precede interest and favorable attitudes toward continued learning" (p. 37). Access to programs and services not only determines participation but also influences the recognition of needs. If women do not have access, they are not familiar with the programs and therefore cannot recognize their needs and interests that can be fulfilled by such programs and services. Again access to programs is determined by their availability and the information received by women about the programs.

The issues of access, participation, need, and motivation seem to be closely related. As observed by Bowman and Anderson (1980), the availability of educational options does not ensure its utilization. Utilization of the existing facilities or programs will take place only when people see them as meeting their immediate needs. People not only need the facilities and to be informed about them, but they need to be made aware of their existing social, cultural, and political realities and constraints in order to recognize their needs.

In this study interest in basic skills (literacy), and health, and child care programs was found to be low, but the demand for skills that generate income was high. Clark (1978) has reported several projects in which women expanded their interests to include health, family planning and other issues after becoming involved in project activities designed to increase their income. In a project implemented by the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)¹ which organizes women's trade groups in unorganized sector and provides training to upgrade their skills, women demanded a literacy class after increased confidence in being able to bring about improvement in their lives. Some of the studies (Dixit, 1975; Kale and Coombs, 1980) and interviews with program staff in this study leads to suggest that there is little felt need for literacy but there is a need to

create an awareness for literacy. As seen in the SEWA project, this awareness can be created once the felt need (income generation) is met.

Endnotes

1. For information about the SEWA project see J. Sebstad, 1982, Struggle and Development among Self Employed Women: A Report on the Self Employed Women's Association, Washington, D. C: Bureau for Science and Technology, United States Agency for International Development.

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the data presented in the previous chapters, presents the implications drawn from the discussions and provides suggestions for further research in the field of nonformal education for women. It is hoped that the implications of the findings will be of practical significance to program planners and practitioners in the field of Adult & Extension Education, Rural Development, Community Education & Development, and Women in Development.

Summary

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the nonformal education needs of rural women in India. A one village case study was conducted to investigate the nonformal education needs of women in the sociocultural context.

Specifically, the objectives of the study were: (1) to examine the physical, social and cultural milieu that determine women's need for and participation in nonformal education; (2) to identify their needs that can be addressed through nonformal education programs; and (3) to explore the perceptions and attitudes of women toward nonformal education.

It was assumed that the needs of women are determined by and grow out of the sociocultural context and therefore can be adequately understood only in terms of this context. An ethnographic approach to the case study was therefore considered to be most appropriate means of accomplishing the objectives of the

study. The techniques used for collecting data were: (a) participant observation; (b) in-depth interviews--both unstructured and semi-structured; (c) group discussions; and (d) documents such as census reports, evaluation reports on and materials used in nonformal education.

The village was selected in Gujarat State in India as the researcher was familiar with the language and culture of this region and had previous field experience in this region. The selection of the village was based on certain criteria. The focus of the study being on women's nonformal education, observations and interviews of women from different caste quarters or ward were conducted to study their needs, perceptions, attitudes toward education, and their daily chores and participation in various activities.

Women's activities were observed in the natural setting to learn about their daily chores, interaction with other members of the community, freedom of movement, participation in various clubs, programs etc. Observations of programs in other villages and of training sessions for instructors and supervisors of the adult education program were conducted in order to understand the problems and issues concerning nonformal education.

In-depth interviews with informants such as local leaders, teachers, and other key figures in the community helped in assessing women's needs in the sociocultural context of the community. Interviews with the staff and administrators of the nonformal education programs were held to obtain their perspective on women's nonformal education programs and to understand some of the problems and bottlenecks in the implementation of the programs.

Documents were used to supplement the data gathered through observations and interviews. These included census reports to gather

demographic information about the area; reports of other studies on evaluation of nonformal education programs to compare the data of the present study; and a review of the instructional materials used in the nonformal education programs.

In the following section a summary of the data is presented with focus on the main questions addressed in the study. These are: (1) How do rural women perceive nonformal education (2) What are the physical, social, cultural constraints affecting women's needs and participation in nonformal education (3) What are the needs of women that can be addressed by nonformal education programs (4) what are the implications of the above in planning nonformal education programs for rural women?

There are several factors affecting women's needs, interests and participation in nonformal education programs, especially those pertaining to policy, program design, curriculum, training of functionaries, administration, implementation, etc. However, these issues were examined only to the extent they directly affected the community studied, as it is beyond the scope of this study to deal with all aspects of women's nonformal education programs.

The concept of nonformal education was translated into concrete examples of programs, activities or tasks, as it could not be understood by most women, and conveyed a different meaning to a few others. In general, women associated most learning activity with schooling and thus perceived it to be beyond their reach or capability. Many women felt that they were too old to engage in a learning activity, especially certain basic skills such as literacy and numeracy. At the conceptual level nonformal education was associated with formal education and seemed to have similar negative connotations. Similar

findings have been reported by Medina (1987). At the concrete level, nonformal education was often associated with some of the government implemented programs that were perceived to be of little direct benefit to the people. Majority of the women failed to see any connection between nonformal education, such as literacy, and improving the quality of life.

In general, there seemed to be an ambivalent attitude toward education and similarly toward nonformal education. Although they showed little enthusiasm about nonformal education for themselves, they preferred it to formal education for their daughters. A few misconceptions were noticed about nonformal education. The Adult Education Program was seen as a Literacy class, although its objectives included more than literacy, and the nutrition training was perceived to be a cooking demonstration. Such misconceptions about the program objectives along with other aspects of the program such as credibility of the instructors, perceived relevance of the program, access to programs in terms of their time and location, were some of the variables that affected women's attitude toward and participation in these programs.

The study revealed that the physical, social and cultural milieu significantly contributed to shaping women's needs and attitudes towards nonformal education. Their access to programs was often limited by the physical and social structure. The latter was influenced by the power elites (male leaders) in the society who often served as gatekeepers to outsiders interested in implementing educational and developmental programs for women. The influence of local leaders on the success of nonformal education and development programs has been reported by several other studies (Clark, 1979; Rainey, 1979; & Sheth, 1981). In this village, although the male leaders did not

directly attempt to block any programs; they showed little interest in arranging programs for women, and did not extend any active support to those involved in implementing it.

The issues of access, participation, need and motivation were found to be closely related. It was found that women's access to information about various schemes and projects that were of direct benefit to them was limited. As mentioned in a study by Hale (1977), women mainly received information from indirect sources, if at all. Information about programs was often mediated through the village headman or other male leaders who are usually first contacted by the program implementors. Access to programs then, depended upon whether women were informed about them.

Social roles and cultural expectations determined women's attitude towards and need for nonformal education. Their perception of their role, the freedom of movement allowed, the patterns of interaction within different social groups, amount of leisure time available, all seemed to influence the way women perceived their need for nonformal education and their participation in it. All these in turn vary according to the class and caste to which they belong. This has important implications for their participation in nonformal education. If women cannot (or are not supposed to) perform certain roles or use certain skills, the need for learning such skills does not exist or is not recognized. It was found that the internalization of their subordinate role and the cultural prohibitions had conditioned them to accept these roles and prevented them from aspiring for learning activities that were outside their social and cultural framework. For instance, most women reported that, "such activities or programs are not for us, what is the use of learning such things (literacy,

nutrition, etc.), our job is to cook, clean, tend cattle, feed children, etc."

Similarly, Morris (1978) reports that women either choose to or are allowed to participate only in those programs that reinforce their traditional roles in the society.

Women in this village, as in the Indian society in general, are not a homogeneous group. That their roles and responsibilities differ according to their class and size of land holding of the household has also been documented by other studies (Nelson, 1979; Hale, 1977; Sharma, 1980; & Wallace et al., 1987). Their needs were diverse and varied according to the various categories to which they belong. The needs expressed by women varied not only according to the class and caste, but also according to their age, level of education, occupation, and their position in the family, for instance, whether one was a daughter, daughter-in-law or mother-in-law. Similarly, studies on educational needs of women conducted in the U. S. by Cross and Zusman (1977) have also found that interest in adult education is related to socioeconomic status.

Women from the lower socio-economic class, who had less social restrictions on their freedom of movement, were in a better position to decide what they would like to learn but were restricted by time due to household responsibilities and farm work. Findings from a few other studies similarly suggest that women from the lower classes tend not to avail themselves of services and programs (Griffith, 1978; Khan & Ayesha, 1982; Patel, Pandya & Trivedi, 1973); and that their living conditions exclude them from participating in useful programs and thereby help to perpetuate their social and economic deprivation (Jayaweera, 1979).

Women who were directly involved in agricultural work expressed interest in agriculture training programs, although they were not willing to participate at the cost of missing a day's work and wages. Women from the middle class and lower classes who were not involved in agricultural work showed interest in programs that would help them generate income, such as soap making, candle making, etc. Women from upper and middle class backgrounds were more interested in sewing and cooking classes. Very few women expressed an interest in health, family planning, child care and nutrition programs. Such programs are meaningful only if they are of direct use to their families. The most commonly held interest by majority of the women was learning ways to increase their income. As noted by Cross and Zusman (1977) people have a pragmatic approach to education. These findings are similar to those found in various other projects in India and in other developing countries.

Literacy programs were of little interest to a majority of women. Those who showed interest in such programs were usually young and were school dropouts. Literacy alone, unless linked with other functional skills that were of interest and relevance, had little appeal. Similar observations are reported by Bhasin (1984), Dixit (1975), and Stone (1983). On the whole, literacy was not perceived to be important for improving their living conditions and there was no felt need for it. The priority of needs--to engage in activities that generate income before acquiring literacy skills--suggests a hierarchy of needs explained by Maslow (1970) in which people are not able to attend to the higher order needs until their basic needs are satisfied.

Women's needs were also determined by exposure to or familiarity with the existing nonformal education programs. Many women who had seen or heard about a program in another village suggested that such programs be offered in their village. There is considerable evidence that people want things they are accustomed to or perceive as possible in their situation (Hamilton-Smith, 1975).

It can be said that most women in this village were not aware of some of their needs and were not motivated to participate in many of the nonformal education programs. The findings of the study support the literature on "felt needs" that adults often are not aware of their most important needs and as suggested by Leagans (1964) all needs must become "felt" before they serve as motivating forces. As noted by Leagans, when people feel comfortable with their established ways, and when the situation is seen as ideal, desirable or satisfactory, no need is recognized. Often women were either not aware of their needs or could not conceive of an organized learning activity to acquire certain skills. For instance, traditionally child care and dairying are considered to be skills that are informally acquired within the family, by observing other family members, and not through formal learning. Hence there was no felt need for such programs. However, in two other villages it was observed that women participated in large numbers in a dairy training program.

With regard to participation in nonformal education programs, women had specific suggestions regarding the time, location and duration of the programs that would enhance their participation. They suggested that the program should be offered near their residence, preferably in their ward; that it should be of 3-6 months duration, preferably in summer for convenience to

agricultural workers; and that it be offered at night or afternoon. A majority of the women preferred a female instructor from outside their village as they are perceived as being better qualified than those from one's own village. They also suggested that some incentive be offered to motivate people to attend the program.

Social and cultural norms also influenced women's motivation to participate in nonformal education. Many of them showed their readiness to attend a program if other women from their ward or neighborhood attended. As women are not supposed to go out unescorted, it is socially acceptable for them to attend such events only if accompanied by other women. Another important consideration in the Indian context is the issue of caste segregation. Women from the lower castes (especially the untouchable or scheduled caste), generally do not consider it appropriate to sit (in a meeting or class) with those from the higher castes. This affects participation of women from the lower castes and classes and therefore has significant implications for planning programs that are targeted at women from different castes.

Participation of women in programs implemented in the village was also influenced by the approach used by program organizers--whether women were directly contacted, informed and motivated or not. Direct communication with the target group appeared to be the key element in motivating women to participate.

The observations of this study are supported by other studies in India that has shown that there are physical, social, structural and organizational constraints operating in a rural society which prevent people, particularly

women, from availing themselves of existing services (Mazumdar, 1978; Sharma, 1984).

The study illustrates that women's needs are complex and varied. Their needs differ according to their class, caste and occupational categories suggesting an approach which involves designing a variety of nonformal education programs to meet these needs.

Besides these characteristics of women and the constraints within the village, there are certain program characteristics and inadequacies that directly or indirectly affect women's participation in and access to the programs. Some of the program characteristics that hinder participation of women were observed in this study. They are: (1) lack of motivation on the part of some of the program functionaries; (2) lack of credibility of the local staff; (3) unavailability of effective materials and techniques that would attract people to participate; (4) lack of coordination between agencies implementing different educational and development programs.

Since the above findings are based on observations in one village, where there was a lack of awareness for and interest in nonformal education programs, it gives a negative and pessimistic view of the relevance and utility of such programs. Although similar observations are reported from other areas, there are a few success stories where nonformal education programs have been found to have made a significant contribution in meeting the needs of women and in creating an awareness for education and social change. Stone (1980) describes two successful case studies in India in which income and social goals were priorities to meet the felt needs of people; and the goals were directly based on the interests and immediate needs of adults. Clark (1978) also mentions several

projects in which women expanded their interests to include health, family planning and other issues, after becoming involved in project activities designed to increase their income. Similar observations were made in the SEWA project where literacy became a felt need after women gained confidence in upgrading their skills to improve their earning potential.

These cases illustrate that it is possible to design program strategies to increase women's awareness of their situation, to enable them to analyze their problems and recognize their needs, to motivate them to participate in programs that enhance their skills that would lead to greater self-reliance.

The findings from the study of the village suggests that women were not aware of their needs, had little exposure to programs that would help them recognize their needs and learn skills for improving the quality of life. Their fatalistic attitudes, lack of skills and lack of empowerment leads to a greater dependency on the social structure which is often oppressive and imposes constraints preventing them from participating and availing themselves of programs and services--further leading to lack of skills, dependency and domestication--thus forming a vicious cycle. The task of nonformal education programs is to break this negative chain and replace it with a positive one which leads toward creating awareness, self-reliance, liberation, and empowerment (see Figure 3).

The approach of "conscientization" used by Paulo Freire (1970) seems appropriate in such situations in which, through the process of "problematization" people are made aware of the socially oppressive structure and are enabled to identify their needs and problems. The process of conscientization leads to an awareness of the forces--economic, political, social,

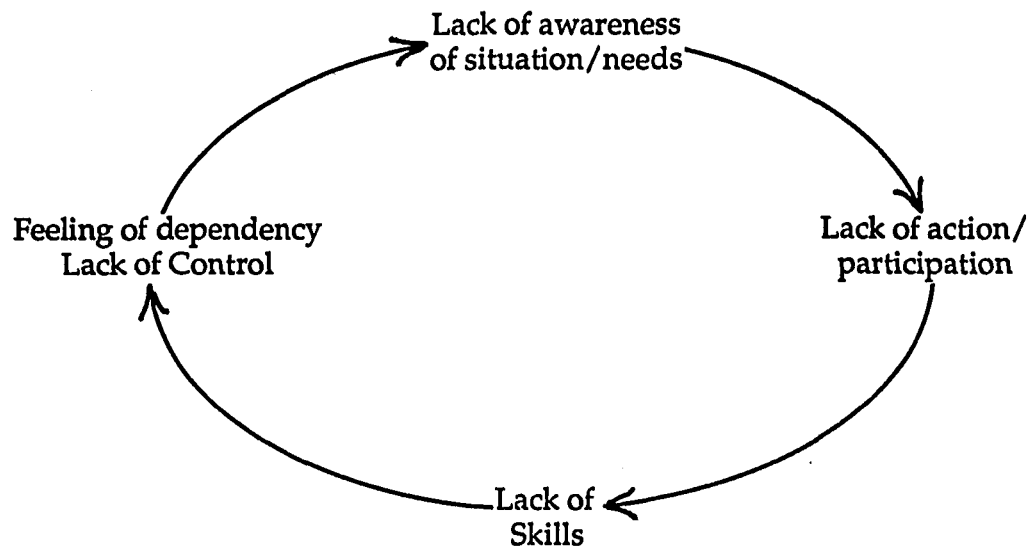
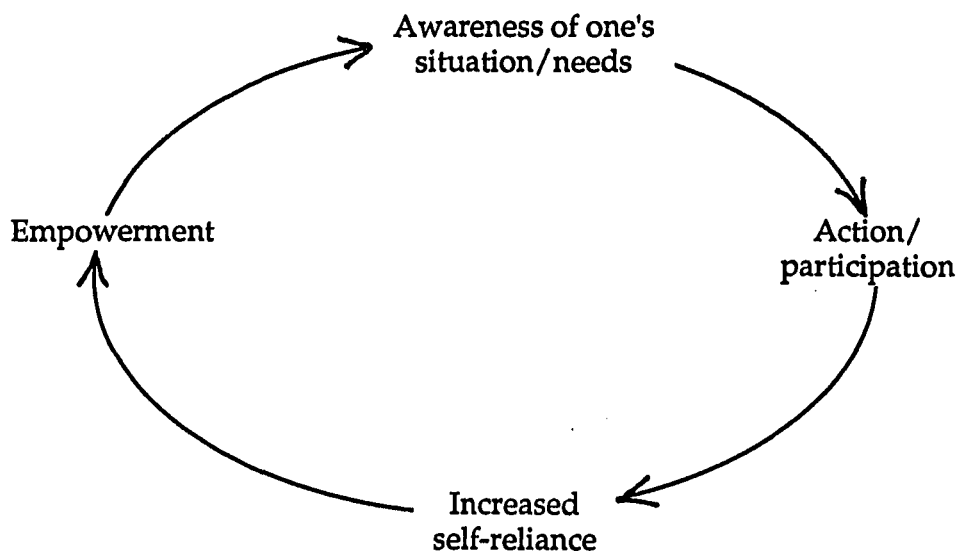
Negative**Positive**

Figure 3. Vicious cycle

and psychological--which shape one's life, and a realistic understanding of one's ability to act upon and control those forces. Freire's approach involves recognizing the felt needs but does not end there. According to him the felt needs must be problematized or questioned as to their causes if people are to achieve true liberation. This approach leads not only to the acquisition of literacy skills, but more importantly, involves the learners in a process of problem-posing in which they describe, analyze, and act to redesign their realities.

Recommendations

Based on the observations in the village and of programs in other villages, and literature on case studies of nonformal education in the Third World, certain recommendations can be made for research and planning in the field of adult and nonformal education for women.

Program Planning and Implementation

1. Develop participatory or learner-centered approaches that involve women (target audience) in the process of project design. Such approaches are likely to create interest and awareness among learners and ensure greater participation. Such programs would be perceived as more relevant by the people as they would be based upon their felt needs and an understanding of their situation and problems.

2. Define specific categories of women for identifying the target group for a project. This is particularly important since women's needs were found to be diverse among the different categories--class, caste, age, occupation, etc.
3. Determine the content in view of the broader aspect of development rather than aim at literacy per se. Literacy programs should be linked to satisfaction of basic needs and aim at enabling women to participate in development.
4. Design programs that aim at meeting the felt needs of women at least initially, in order to arouse interest and then work towards creating awareness of other needs such as literacy, health, etc. Such an approach has been used successfully in various projects in which literacy was introduced after the need for increasing their income and other felt needs were met.
5. Allow flexibility in the approach. Especially the time, location and duration of programs should be arranged according to the convenience of the target group. More localized planning is recommended as class and occupational composition of people, which determine their roles and responsibilities, differ from region to region and often between villages within a region.
6. Aim at mobilizing women to take action and create awareness rather than limit programs to imparting skills. This will involve bringing groups of women around a common issue, creating a dialogue, building confidence through acquiring skills and knowledge, and organizing for a collective action. The nonformal educator would be required to play a dynamic role--that of a change agent and social animator.
7. Use media-- both small and big, mass media and indigenous folk media. These could be effectively used to attract people to participate, to sustain interest and to provide relevant information. A system of development

support communication should be established to ensure delivery of messages that are informative, persuasive and attuned to the social and cultural milieu.

8. Attempt at coordination of different infrastructures and agencies working toward the common goal, in order to have a strong support system for the nonformal education programs to function effectively.
9. Involve local leaders and infrastructures in the implementation of the program. As the local power structure exerts a significant influence on the functioning of programs in the village and upon women's participation in it, the support of the local leaders should be sought to implement the program. Support and involvement of the community as a whole--men, women, local infrastructures and leaders is crucial for nonformal education to function effectively.
10. Arrange for effective use of existing local institutions or groups, such as the women's club, to promote new messages of health, nutrition, etc., in order to create awareness for such skills and knowledge. As these institutions are already in operation and are accepted by women, the problem of participation and attendance does not arise.
11. Strengthen various components of the program such as training of staff. The techniques used in "training of trainers" could be employed to train instructors to carry out a dialogue and discussion with women and to identify their needs. Also better incentives for the instructors and staff and an approach that would motivate the staff and participants would enhance the effectiveness of the programs.

Research

12. Alternative methods of research that democratizes and demystifies research should be employed. The use of participatory research to assess the needs of the target group has been known to motivate them and increase participation. More action research should be undertaken in which the community is involved in the process of research, program design, implementation and evaluation.
13. The "focus group" techniques suggested by Krueger (1988) and Lee (1984) can also be used effectively to identify the needs of the target group.
14. Ethnographic case studies that are context-specific would give program planners better insight and concrete information to make decisions about program design and strategies to suit the local culture and conditions.
15. Profiles of women from different clusters of population (different class or caste) describing their needs and characteristics would also help in designing programs that are relevant to specific groups.

Conclusion

The study indicates that nonformal education is not always a felt need of the rural women. Sociocultural forces exert considerable influence in shaping the educational needs of women and on their participation in nonformal education programs. In a community where social and cultural norms and attitudes have a strong influence on women's lives, it is not sufficient to recognize their felt needs and to design programs to meet these needs. The need in nonformal education for adults is to design programs that will create a

consciousness among people so as to enable them to analyze their situation, recognize their needs, become aware of the sociocultural reality that influences and shapes their lives, and to develop their ability to transform their reality. Such consciousness raising should be an integral part of the skill training programs.

A recommended strategy would be to turn the negative cycle of lack of awareness, lack of skills, dependency and lack of empowerment (observed in this study), into a positive chain of greater awareness and participation in learning, leading to liberation and empowerment.

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